DIVINE IMPERSONATIONS:
NYOIRIN KANNON IN MEDIEVAL JAPAN

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sarah Alizah Fremerman

September 2008

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(Carl Bielefeldt) Principal Adviser

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(Paul Harrison)

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that, in my opinion, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(Bernard Faure)

Approved for the Stanford University Committee on Graduate Studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many people and organizations for making this project possible.

Above all I thank my two advisors who oversaw the research and writing of this dissertation. Over the years Carl Bielefeldt has given me expert advice on the direction, content, and organization of my research, guided me in questions of translation, set me straight when I was straying into "I'm confused" territory, and made logistical miracles happen. Bernard Faure has provided a wealth of knowledge and inspiration, and led me to countless resources that have helped to shape this project; if it were not for him I would never have discovered this topic or known what to do with it. I am grateful to both of them for their friendship and for the education they have given me, not only in Buddhist studies but also in their respective disciplines of irony and paradox.

I also want to thank the other members of my committee for generously offering their time and expertise to help improve this project. Paul Harrison gave my dissertation a thorough going-over, advised me on translation issues, and offered valuable theoretical suggestions. Steven D. Carter and Charlotte Fonrobert brought fresh perspectives to my work and helped me to see the issues in a new light.

In Japan, Yoshida Sanae kindly sponsored my research at the Shiryō Hensanjo at the University of Tokyo, and Ōhashi Akiko helped guide me through administrative matters. Iyanaga Nobumi offered sage advice on where to look for what.

My thanks to the following people who offered help, advice, resources, conversation, books, articles, ideas, and encouragement along the way: Monica Bethe, Fumiko Bielefeldt, Flora Botton, Claudia Brittenham, Michelle Chase, George Clonos, Michael Como, Tad Cook, Jill Cutler, Wiebke Denecke, Shari Epstein, T. Griffith Foulk, Fujihira Kanden, Luis O. Gómez, David Gray, Lisa Grumbach, Linda Hess, Michael Jamentz, Kasai Kenta, William W. Kelly, Irene Lin, David Lurie, John Marston, Lori Meeks, Carlos Mondragón, Richard Payne, Benjamín Preciado, Fabrizio Pregadio, David Quinter, James Robson, Sakakibara Sayoko, Gaynor Sekimori, Robert

Sharf, Vanessa Wanger, Stanley Weinstein, Yang Zhaohua, Lee Yearley, Yü Chün-fang, and Michael Zimmermann.

Special thanks to Michael McCarty, who did a great job of tracking down obscure references in the final phase of this project; to Pamela Suárez of Alejandro Aptilon Arquitectos for preparing the map; and to Sunny Toy, Jill Covington, and Alberto Martin for helping me to sort out the administrative logistics of writing a dissertation (and submitting it from afar).

Support for the research and writing of this dissertation was provided by the Stanford University School of Humanities and Sciences and the Department of Religious Studies, the Stanford Center for East Asian Studies, the Stanford Humanities Center, and the Stanford Institute for International Studies. Portions of this dissertation were presented and thoughtfully critiqued in various settings, and I am grateful for all the valuable feedback and advice I have received. In particular, a pair of joint seminars organized by the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies and the Centro de Estudios de Asia y África at El Colegio de México gave me an opportunity to discuss chapters of this work with a group of insightful and critical scholars. I also thank Barbara Ruch, the Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies at Columbia University, and its sister organization in Kyoto, the Chūsei Nihon Kenkyūjo, for a very enriching stay in Kyoto. The librarians at the East Asia Library at Stanford University and the Shiryō Hensanjo at the University of Tokyo offered invaluable help along the way.

Throughout this process my family has kept me going. Thanks to Mom and Abba, Dad and Debbie Jean, and Elana, for listening, cheering me up, and reminding me that it would be nice if I finished this project someday. And to Alex, for his love, jokes, and inspired advice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Map of Central Japan

Introduction

In the early years of the Kamakura 鎌倉 period (1185-1333), several prominent Japanese Buddhist monks reported that they had dreamed of a goddess they called the "jewel woman" (J. *gyokujo* 玉女, Ch. *yunü*), a beautiful consort who could lead them to spiritual enlightenment through love. In the most famous case, around 1201 Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263) recorded a dream in which the bodhisattva Kannon 觀音 (Ch. Guanyin, Sk. Avalokiteśvara) appeared to him and promised to take the form of a jewel woman who would become his lover and ultimately lead him to paradise. This dream is said to have inspired Shinran to leave the celibate priesthood and marry.[1] His account was not the first such description, however, but echoes a passage from a slightly earlier text, the *Kakuzen shō* 覺禪鈔, a Shingon 眞言 manual compiled around 1182, in which Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪觀音, a Tantric form of Avalokiteśvara, appears in the role of the jewel woman.

[1] Shinbutsu 眞佛 (1209-1258), *Shinran muki* 親鸞夢記, in *Teihon Shinran Shōnin Zenshū* 定本親鸞聖人全集 4, ed. Shinran Shōnin zenshū kankōkai 親鸞聖人全集刊行会 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1969-70), 201-2. These two passages are cited and their relationship discussed in Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 205-6. The Japanese term may be pronounced *gyokujo* or *gyokunyo,* and may also be translated as "jade woman."

> The mind of wrong views arises, and one is overcome by lustful desires, [so that one] must fall and descend into [this] world. Nyoirin herself becomes the jewel woman of the sovereign. [She] becomes his beloved wife or concubine, and they fall in love. For a lifetime [she] adorns [him] with blessings and honor, and causes boundless good things to be accomplished. [She] causes him to attain buddhahood in the Western Pure Land paradise.[2]

By this time Nyoirin Kannon was already widely known in Japan for her power to grant both salvation and worldly happiness. Scholars have remarked upon this passage in the *Kakuzen shō* because it explicitly identifies this particular form of Avalokiteśvara as female, a development that seems to have occurred only in Japan. Not only medieval esoteric texts but also sculptures and paintings dating from the ninth century onward are said to depict Nyoirin with increasingly "feminine" characteristics. Another famous example of her feminine allure is the ninth-century statue of the bodhisattva housed at the Shingon temple Kanshinji 観心寺, which has long been praised by both priests and art historians for its mysterious, seductive charm.[3] This work and other paintings and sculptures of the bodhisattva offer glimpses of an image that might well have haunted the dreams of monks—a graceful figure seated on a lotus blossom, holding in her six hands symbols of both material and spiritual wealth, one

---

[2] *DNBZ* 47, 181b-182a. The Pure Land (J. *jōdo* 浄土, Ch. *jingtu*) in this case refers to the paradise where believers in Amitābha (J. Amida 阿彌陀, Ch. Amituo) Buddha will be born after death, because of his compassionate vow to save all beings.

[3] The so-called "femininity" of this and other Nyoirin images is debated, however, because most can also be read as androgynous. The lack of breasts or presence of mustaches in some images with delicate "feminine" features further confuses the issue, and suggests that Nyoirin's "feminization" is best traced through a reading of medieval Japanese texts rather than images, though the texts also offer much room for interpretation on this subject. In any case, the images leave open possibilities for feminization that the texts render somewhat more explicit.

hand cupping a magic wish-fulfilling jewel (J. *nyoi hōju* 如意寶珠, Ch. *ruyi baozhu*, Sk. *cintāmaṇi*), another twirling on one fingertip a wheel (J. *rin* 輪, Ch. *lun*, Sk. *cakra*) symbolizing the Buddhist teachings. Reflecting these attributes, the bodhisattva's Sanskrit name is Cakravarti-cintāmaṇi-avalokiteśvara (or Cintāmaṇicakra-avalokiteśvara).[4]

Taking Nyoirin's "jewel woman" manifestation as its starting point, this study traces some of her most important transformations in Japan from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. It serves as an episodic history that identifies key moments of her convergence with various indigenous Japanese and imported Buddhist deities, and in the process, her transformation from an androgynous Tantric bodhisattva in the Tang 唐 (618-907) Chinese texts that serve as the canonical basis for her worship, to a wish-granting goddess figure in Japan. This "feminization" was by no means absolute or continuous, but flickered in and out as Nyoirin's identity merged with those of various jewel-bearing goddess figures in Japan, a process for which her own *cintāmaṇi* often served as catalyst. This study seeks to create a picture of the "person" of Nyoirin as it evolved in medieval Japanese texts.[5]

To speak of the feminization of a bodhisattva is tricky, of course, since such beings always reserve the right to maintain their androgyny, appearing in male or female, human or animal forms according to circumstances and the needs of sentient beings. Yet certain patterns in the case of Nyoirin are evident. It is well known that

---

[4] On Nyoirin's iconography in Japanese sculpture, see Sherry D. Fowler, "Nyoirin Kannon: Stylistic Evolution of Sculptural Images," *Orientations* vol. 20 (1989), and also Sherry D. Fowler, "Nyoirin Kannon: A Chronological Analysis of Six-Armed Sculptural Examples from the Ninth through the Fourteenth Century" (M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1989).

[5] It is not a technical study of the bodhisattva's ritual and iconographic details. We will leave that project for other scholars to pursue in the future.

Avalokiteśvara changed gender in China, from male to female, in the early Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279), around the beginning of the eleventh century. But not all the forms of Guanyin changed in the same way, or at the same time. Ruyilun/Nyoirin is a curious case because she appears to have taken on explicitly female characteristics—at least at certain moments—only in Japan, and possibly very early, by the mid-ninth century. Moreover, by the late Heian 平安 (794-1186) and Kamakura periods, she had attained a widespread popularity in Japan that she had likely never enjoyed in China, playing a central role in court rituals; becoming a favorite object of worship for women, associated with fertility, childbirth, and by the Muromachi 室町 period (1392-1573) with salvation from the "Blood Pool Hell" (J. *chi no ike jigoku* 地の池地獄); and appearing not only in the Shingon pantheon but also in Tendai 天台, Sōtō Zen 曹洞禅, and other sects.[6]

To call these transformations a process of "feminization," however, is problematic for other reasons as well. The definition of femininity in medieval Japan is complex and ambiguous; for the purposes of this study, it is indicated by the clear presence of feminine pronouns or other descriptive terms, or by gender role (wife, concubine, mother, and so forth), but even then we are sometimes on shaky ground in identifying a particular deity as feminine. Furthermore, in many of the Chinese and

---

[6] Despite Nyoirin's importance in both clerical and lay circles in medieval Japan, she never attained the widespread popular devotion that other forms of Kannon received during that time. She does not appear, for example, in medieval tale collections such as the *Hokke genki* 法華験記 or *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (though she does appear in the fourteenth-century *Shintōshū* 神道集, which presents an intriguing topic for future research). The worldly benefits she promised proved highly appealing to court and aristocratic society, but at the same time we might say that she was in competition with other forms of Kannon, and eclipsed by them in the popular imagination, particularly with the rise of Pure Land faith from the late Heian period onward.

Japanese texts we will examine in this study, a lack of gender-specific pronouns means there is no clear shift from the use of "he" in Chinese texts to "she" in the Japanese context. I employ these different pronouns in the two realms to indicate the general trends that I perceive in both cases. Though I do use the term "feminization" here at times, it would be more accurate to say that a bodhisattva whose gender seems to have remained largely androgynous—that is, not explicitly female—in China merged with several female deities in Japan, and in the process the entity to whom the name "Nyoirin Kannon" referred sometimes took on female characteristics, though his/her androgyny also persisted. Also, as we will see, no single, fixed entity inhabits the name Ruyilun/Nyoirin, so we cannot speak of even a mythological "individual" changing from one gender to another. The phenomena that our texts reveal might be better described as a kind of "gender play" in which female identities became central to the persona(s) of this bodhisattva in Japan. Just as Buddhism teaches the doctrine of "no-self," yet Buddhists speak of individual beings out of convenience, on the level of conventional truth, so in this study I take the liberty of referring to this bodhisattva as a coherent individual entity, even though he/she clearly was not that.

In fact, my main argument is that Nyoirin's transformations in Japan can be traced to her merging with other deities: that due to certain sets of shifting circumstances she came to serve as a mask or mouthpiece for various indigenous gods, or *kami* 神, and for Indian Buddhist deities that had taken up residence in Japan. In that sense her identity can be understood as a series of mutable "impersonations," in which these figures took possession of her name at different times and places. The exchange went both ways, as Nyoirin found her "voice" through local deities, and they found their

Buddhist identity through her, in some cases taking her name as a badge of Buddhist orthodoxy. Thus "Nyoirin Kannon" was never a single identifiable entity, but rather a shifting field of associations, a name that was freely borrowed and lent.

Nyoirin played a special role in medieval Japan. By the early Kamakura period, Buddhism had erupted into a period of dramatic transition, a molten state, its old institutions giving way to a series of reform movements that eventually crystallized into the forms of thought and practice that now compose the topography of Japanese Buddhism. As political power shifted from the imperial court to the Kamakura warrior government, or *bakufu* 幕府, daily life for both courtiers and commoners was rife with political unrest and economic instability, and haunted by fears of floods, droughts, earthquakes, epidemics, and other natural disasters. Calamities were believed to be caused by demonic interference, and there was a great demand for spiritual technologies to keep these harmful forces at bay. The most effective method was Tantric or esoteric Buddhist ritual, which had pervaded the courtly culture of the Heian period. The figure of Nyoirin Kannon was rooted in the world of Tantric Buddhism, and in Heian and Kamakura Japan she was worshipped by men and women, clergy and laity, and also became a powerful protector of the sovereign and nation.[7]

---

[7] Nyoirin/Ruyilun is one of several Tantric forms of Avalokiteśvara that originated in India, became popular in Tang China, and were transmitted to Japan from the eighth century onward. The question of what is "Tantric" (or not) leads into thorny territory, but for the purposes of this study, in determining what phenomena are considered Tantric—beyond their traditional classification as such within Japanese Buddhism—I go by the fairly straightforward definition offered by Agehananda Bharati in his introduction to *The Tantric Tradition*: "What distinguishes tantric from other Hindu and Buddhist teaching," he writes, "is its systematic emphasis on the identity of the absolute (*paramārtha*) and the phenomenal (*vyavahāra*) world when filtered through the experience of *sādhanā* [contemplative exercises]." He also notes that both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra are characterized by a philosophical perspective in which "reality is one, but it is to be grasped through a process of conceptual and intuitive

In this milieu, it was most of all Shingon and Tendai esoteric (J. Taimitsu 台密) clerics who lauded and promoted the worship of Nyoirin, and performed her rituals on behalf of their imperial and aristocratic patrons. The late Heian and Kamakura periods marked a time of intense free-market religious competition among Buddhist groups. In spite of the "new" Buddhist movements of Zen, Pure Land, and the like, the imperial court was still enchanted with the idea of achieving worldly benefits through efficacious esoteric rites, and the charisma of the monks with the power to bring such results held an irresistible charm. During this time Nyoirin reached the height of her popularity, partly because of the benefits she promised, but also because her jewel converged with that of the imperial regalia—mirror, sword, and jewel—which in turn came to be identified with Buddha relics (J. *shari* 舍利, Ch. *sheli*, Sk. *śarīra*). Brian Ruppert among others has shown that beginning in the Heian period Japanese sovereigns used possession of relics to strengthen their legitimacy in times of contested authority, and the illustrious founder of Shingon, Kūkai 空海 (774-835), identified relics as *cintāmaṇi*, or wish-fulfilling jewels, and established several major Shingon rituals in

polarization," such as activity and passivity, and when these poles merge, a state of "absolute oneness and quiescence is realized." See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 18-19. More specifically, Tantras are texts describing esoteric meditation practices that present themselves as secret teachings deriving from the Buddha himself, though most date to a period over 1,000 years after his death; see Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 268-9.

We should also be aware that in the study of Japanese Buddhism in particular there is a danger of reading Japanese categorizations of esoteric or Tantric Buddhism back into a Chinese, Korean, or Indian context, which would suggest that such distinctions existed outside of Japan when they likely did not. In this study, though I argue that the Tantric deity Ruyilun/Nyoirin was absorbed into a context in Japan in which many new "esoteric" associations were forged, I do not mean to imply that a previous esoteric system was lost and a new one adopted. I want to suggest rather that these very classifying and associative tendencies helped to create a unique identity for this bodhisattva in Japan.

which they reaffirmed and regenerated the power of the sovereign.[8] At the same time, the "jewel woman" with which Nyoirin converged had also long been known in Japan as a goddess figure connecting imperial authority to female sexuality, as one of the seven treasures of the ideal Buddhist "wheel-turning king," or *cakravartin* (J. *tenrinnō* 轉輪王, Ch. *zhuanlunwang*), and in esoteric (J. *mikkyō* 密教, Ch. *mijiao*) and Yin-yang divination (J. *onmyōdō* 陰陽道, Ch. *yinyangdao*) circles as a deity specializing in worldly happiness, especially conjugal harmony.

From the late Heian period onward, as the power of the Fujiwara 藤原 clan that had dominated court life for centuries declined, and cloistered sovereigns beginning with Shirakawa 白河 rose to reclaim their imperial power by creating a parallel establishment of retired sovereigns (J. *insei* 院政), possession of this relic-jewel took on increasing importance. At the same time, scholars like Tanaka Takako 田中貴子 and Abe Yasuro 阿部泰郎 have shown how the imperial house paradoxically drew on the liminal power of female and marginal entities (such as the "jewel woman") to bolster its authority. The Ono 小野 branch of Shingon was a key player during the late Heian and early Kamakura periods, as it offered the chief religious institutional support for the legitimacy of retired emperors, in a ritual system within which Nyoirin played a central role.

The material culture of *cintāmaṇi* worship in this context presents another rich

---

[8] Brian Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 43-141. Also see the well-known essay on this subject by Abe Yasuro 阿部泰郎, "Hōju to ōken: chūsei ōken to mikkō girei" 宝珠と王権ー中世王権と密教儀礼, in Iwanami kōza tōyō shisō 岩波講座東洋思想 16, *Nihon shisō* 日本思想, 2 vols., ed. Yamaori Tetsuo 山折哲夫 et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 115-69. On the royal elements and origins of Tantric Buddhism, see Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

area of research that is beyond the scope of this study, but we should also keep in mind that as relics came to be increasingly identified as wish-fulfilling jewels in Shingon practice—particularly in the Daigoji 醍醐寺 tradition of the Ono school—the worship of both proliferated in the form of miniature shrines (J. *zushi* 厨子) and reliquaries; because of Nyoirin's *cintāmaṇi*, she frequently appeared as the main object of devotion in these small portable objects, which no doubt helped to contribute to her popularity. In this setting she is often represented in the form of a five-wheel stupa (J. *gorintō* 五輪塔, Ch. *wulunta*) or relic-jewel, is sometimes identified with Ichiji Kinrin Butchō 一字金輪佛頂 (Ch. Yizu Jinlun Foding, Sk. Ekākṣara buddhoṣṇīṣa cakra), and often forms a triad with Fudō Myōō 不動明王 (Ch. Budong Mingwang, Sk. Acalanātha) and Aizen Myōō 愛染明王 (Ch. Airan Mingwang, Sk. Rāga).[9] While the creation and physical presence of relics and *cintāmaṇi* became increasingly important in Shingon, Tendai esotericism generally eschewed the notion that such objects could be produced in Japan, and though relic and *cintāmaṇi* worship flourished in Tendai as well, the physical objects themselves never gained the currency they had in Shingon circles.

Texts and images devoted to Nyoirin were known in Japan by at least the mid-eighth century, if not earlier.[10] The Tang Chinese texts devoted to Ruyilun that serve as the

---

[9] See Naitō Sakae 内藤榮, "'Busshari to hōju' tenkaisetsu" 「仏舎利と宝珠」展概説, in Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan 奈良國立博物館, ed., *Busshari to hōju: Shaka o shitau kokoro* 仏舎利と宝珠：釋迦を慕う心 [English title: *Ultimate Sanctuaries: The Aesthetics of Buddhist Relic Worship*] (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2001). In a forthcoming essay, Faure analyzes Nyoirin's symbolic place in the medieval tradition of relic and reliquary worship, and discusses several of the reliquaries depicted in the *Busshari to hōju* catalogue. See Bernard Faure, *Raging Gods: The Implicit Pantheon of Medieval Japan* (forthcoming).

[10] Nara documents show that the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* 如意輪陀羅尼經 (J. *Nyoirin darani kyō*) had reached Japan by the first half of the eighth century. The sutra appears in the *Narachō genzai issai kyō so*

basis for her worship in Japan, however, contain no clear precedent for her feminine associations in Japan. These translations, attributed to Bodhiruci (Ch. Putiliuzhi 菩提流志, J. Bodairushi, 572-727), Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong Jingang 不空金剛, J. Fukū Kongō, 705-774), Vajrabodhi (Ch. Jingangzhi 金剛智, J. Kongōchi, 671-741), and others, were done in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. We find in them a figure with the same iconographic features but a character very different from that of our fecund Japanese goddess(es). In this group of texts, Ruyilun appears as a Tantric deity not specified as female, and therefore perhaps understood more widely as male, as was the case with other forms of Avalokiteśvara prior to the eleventh century. He is one of several esoteric forms of Guanyin and, like them, the bearer of an all-powerful *dhāraṇī* (identified as the *cintāmaṇi*) that can vanquish demons, prevent disaster, and generate all kinds of spiritual and material wealth.[11] Though we find no mention here of a jewel woman or goddess figure, there are foreshadowings of what Nyoirin would later become. Like the jewel woman, the Tang Chinese form of Ruyilun is above all a healer, and these "proto-Tantric" texts are known mainly for their therapeutic prescriptions to heal both spiritual and material illness.[12]

---

mokuroku 奈良朝現在一切經疎目録 with a date of 737 (Tenpyō 天平 9). See Ishida Mosaku 石田茂作, *Shakyō yori mitaru narachō bukkyō no kenkyū* 写経より見たる奈良朝仏教の研究 (Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1966), 84.

[11] In Japan, Nyoirin became particularly important in the Sanboinryū lineage of Shingon, which was founded by the priest Shōbō 聖寶 (832-909) at Daigoji, and is one of the earliest streams of this tradition. The *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao* 觀自在如意輪菩薩瑜伽法要 (J. *Kanjizai nyoirin bosatsu yuga hōyō*) and *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui* 觀自在菩薩如意輪念誦儀軌 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin nenjugiki*), among others, are important Shingon ritual texts, particularly in the Sanbōinryū 三宝院流 lineage, and are still recited today.

[12] See Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 103-9 and 201. Strickmann distinguishes what he calls "proto-Tantric" Chinese texts, dating from the third to the sixth centuries, by the fact that the Buddha upon whose authority they rely is Śākyamuni, while in later Tantric texts dating from the early eighth century onward, Vairocana Buddha comes to preside in his place.

Images of Ruyilun Guanyin also appear at several Central Asian and Chinese cave sites, including Dunhuang 敦煌, Longmen 龍門, and Yungang 雲崗, though none has yet been conclusively identified in India. The bodhisattva may be iconographically depicted with two, four, six, eight, ten, or twelve arms; beginning in the Tang she has most often been shown in her six-armed esoteric form. This six-armed form also appears in the Womb Realm (J. *taizōkai* 胎藏界, Ch. Taizangjie) mandala that Kūkai brought from China to Japan. The iconography of Ruyilun/Nyoirin is unusual too in that it retains a distinctly Central Asian flavor—the bodhisattva is widely depicted in the Indian posture of "royal ease" (Sk. *rājalīlāsana*) found in many paintings at Dunhuang and other Chinese sites, but less common in Japan.[13] Beyond the extant Tang translations of sutras devoted to this bodhisattva, we still do not know much about where or when the worship of Ruyilun originated, or how much of what is described in the texts was actually practiced in India or China. Those issues await research in the future.

Though few studies have yet appeared chronicling Nyoirin's various transformations in Japan, several scholars have studied the broader theme of Avalokiteśvara's feminization in China. Rolf Stein's 1986 monograph "Avalokiteśvara/Kouan-yin, un exemple de transformation d'un dieu en déesse" is the first in-depth study of the bodhisattva's gender transformation in India and East Asia.[14]

[13] One useful book for the study of Avalokiteśvara's iconography in general is Nandana Chutiwongs's 1942 survey on the history of visual representations of Avalokiteśvara in India and southeast Asia. Nandana Chutiwongs, *The Iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Mainland South East Asia* (Ph.D. diss., Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1984).

[14] See Rolf Stein, "Avalokiteśvara/Kouan-yin, un exemple de transformation d'un dieu en déesse," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 2 (1986): 17-80. On this topic Stein makes the important point that a bodhisattva

Stein gives substantial attention not only to the Chinese legends of this deity as female, but also to Avalokiteśvara's roots in the older Indian cult of Śiva. In recent years, Yü Chün-fang 于君方 and Iyanaga Nobumi 彌永信美 have built on Stein's work in very different ways. In 2001 Yü published an encyclopedic study chronicling the bodhisattva's gender transformation that culminated in eleventh-century China.[15] Elaborating on Stein's earlier research, she investigates every aspect of the bodhisattva's development in China, including scriptural sources, miracle tales, iconographic representations, and Chinese legends. Where Stein seeks underlying mythical structures, however, Yü is most interested in the domestication of the deity. The more feminine Guanyin becomes, the more Chinese she becomes. While Stein observes the convergence or merging of one deity into another—Śiva with Avalokiteśvara, Avalokiteśvara with Chinese goddess figures—Yü sees the influence of Indian and Chinese indigenous deities rather as external stimuli for changes within Guanyin's cult.

A direct heir to Stein's methodological approach, Iyanaga employs it to carry him beyond the boundaries of Stein's original research. In his recent book on Avalokiteśvara, the second of a two-volume series on Buddhist mythology, Iyanaga first delves into the cult of Śiva in India, and its affinities with Avalokiteśvara and other Buddhist deities in China and Japan; he then examines Avalokiteśvara's gender transformation in East Asia, ranging freely among the worlds of Brahmanic India,

---

is a transformational being whose gender is never final, and thus we should be careful not to make too much of apparent gender changes.

[15] Yü Chün-fang 于君方, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

Hinduism, and Buddhism, from Central Asia to Japan. This work also includes a survey of some of Nyoirin's most important feminine manifestations in Japan.[16]

In a vast body of work that employs both texts and images, the scholar Kobayashi Taichirō 小林太市郎 has also traced the development of Avalokiteśvara's worship in East Asia, focusing not on the bodhisattva's gender change but rather on the blending of his identity with indigenous cults.[17] In Kobayashi's view, local religious practices may borrow the form of Buddhism, a process that has organically transformed Avalokiteśvara's cult. He locates Avalokiteśvara's origins partly in the ancient Iranian cult of Mithra, from which springs the notion of salvation as mediation, the bodhisattva serving as a link between the worlds of Buddhahood and human existence. Kobayashi has illustrated the connections between Avalokiteśvara and indigenous Chinese goddess cults in the late Tang and Song, such as the fertility goddess Nüwa 女媧. For him, the most vital developments in a cult occur locally, in folk religious practices; when these changes are locked away in temples by the elite, they begin to lose their vitality and decline.

The case of Nyoirin in Japan reflects similar circumstances, in the sense that her *cintāmaṇi* appears to have helped trigger a cascade of new associations with local deities that both lent her local authority and at the same time led to her "feminization." Bernard Faure has suggested that a process of "metonymic drift"—in this case the overlapping or linking (or confusion) of elements of different cults as they converge—

[16] Iyanaga Nobumi 彌永信美, *Kannon henyō tan: bukkyō shinwagaku II* 観音変容譚一仏教神話学 II (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2002).
[17] In particular, see Kobayshi Taichirō 小林太市郎, *Bukkyō geijutsu no kenkyū* 仏教芸術の研究, *Shūkyō geijutsu ron hen* 宗教芸術論編 I, *Kobayashi Taichirō chosakushu* 小林太市郎著作集 vol. 7 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1974).

led to an identification of Nyoirin's *cintāmaṇi* with relics and the jewel of the regalia.[18] Once texts and images of the bodhisattva had made their way to Japan, her jewel linked her with several jewel-bearing goddesses of wealth and fertility, including *nāga* (J. *ryū* 龍, Ch. *long*) (snake or dragon deities, which however were not always feminine), Benzaiten 辨才天 (Ch. Biancaitian, Sk. Sarasvatī), Kichijōten 吉祥天 (Ch. Jixiangtian, Sk. Lakśmī or Śrī Mahādevī), and Dakiniten 荼枳尼天 (Ch. Tujinitian, Sk. Dākiṇī), a process that constituted her "feminization." For example, eleventh-century esoteric Buddhist rituals identified Nyoirin as the formerly demonic, flesh-eating goddess Dakiniten; later, by the fourteenth century, Dakiniten had become the central deity for the main Shingon imperial ordination ceremony, administered by Ono monks, which revealed Nyoirin to be a form of both Dakiniten and the *kami* Inari 稲荷, who was in turn understood as a transformation body of the sun goddess Amaterasu 天照; we will explore this complex in more depth later in this study.[19] Throughout the medieval period this process of mythological accretion continued to flourish and to forge new links among deities, grouping them into ever-expanding "families" and reinventing their attributes and forms.[20]

---

[18] Bernard Faure, "A Jewel of a Woman: Medieval Ideology and Wishful Thinking" (paper presented at Yale University, April 1999), 19. On Nyoirin's connection with relics in medieval Japan, see also Bernard Faure, "Relics, Regalia, and the Dynamics of Secrecy in Japanese Buddhism," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions,* ed. Elliott Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridge Press, 1999), 271-87.

[19] See Abe, "Hōju to ōken," 141-48.

[20] Of course, Nyoirin is not the only *cintāmaṇi*-bearing Buddhist deity; the attribute is a common Tantric motif, and Jizō 地藏 (Ch. Dizang, Sk. Kṣitigarbha) is another well-known example of a (generally male) Japanese Buddhist deity who proffers a wish-fulfilling jewel to devotees. Thus the *cintāmaṇi* possesses no inherently feminine characteristics; rather, in Nyoirin's case the jewel happened to converge with those possessed by various goddess figures whose paths she crossed. At the same time, the bodhisattva's jewel and her place in esoteric ritual pantheon linked her with several other male or androgynous deities, including, among others, Aizen Myōō, Myōken 妙見 (Ch. Miaojian), Monju 文殊 (Ch. Wenshu, Sk. Mañjuśrī), and Miroku 彌勒 (Ch. Mile, Sk. Maitreya), as well as the legendary historical figures of Eisai

Nyoirin's cult also became closely intertwined in Japan with the worship of the seven stars of Ursa Major (Great Bear), or the Northern Dipper, which was widespread in Japan from at least the eighth century onward, and has deep roots in Daoism and Chinese esoteric Buddhism. The famous image of Nyoirin at Kanshinji became known by at least the mid-fourteenth century as the Seven-Star Nyoirin, perhaps because according to legend Kūkai was said to have followed the stars of the Northern Dipper into the mountains, where they pointed to the site at which Kanshinji would be established.[21] The short text *Qixing ruyilun bimiyao jing* 七星如意輪祕密要經 (J. *Shichishō nyoirin himitsuyō kyō*) describes a secret ritual in which Ruyilun and the seven stars are enshrined as its main deities.[22] Indeed, Ruyilun was likely already connected to the seven stars in China, as is evident from her image on a set of Tang relic boxes discovered at Famensi 法門寺, near Xian 西安. Among the artifacts discovered there that were sealed in 880, the fourth casket in a nested set of relic boxes is decorated with an image of the six-armed Ruyilun Guanyin, attended by seven other deities; and the innermost box in this set bears an image of the seven stars of Ursa Major.[23] These images affirm Ruyilun's connection not only with the seven stars, but also with relic worship in Tang China.

Though some Chinese texts and images of Ruyilun were already circulating in Japan during the Nara 奈良 period (710-784), it was Kūkai who incorporated the

---

栄西 (1141-1215), Shōtoku Taishi, and Kūkai. We will take a closer look at some of these associations, particularly those with Shōtoku and Kūkai, later in this study.

[21] See Cynthea Bogel, "Canonizing Kannon: The Ninth-Century Esoteric Buddhist Altar at Kanshinji," in *Art Bulletin* LXXXIV, no. 19 (March 2002): 54 and 63 n. 137.

[22] *T.* 76, 1091.

[23] See Wu Limin 吳立民 and Han Jinke 韓金科, *Famensi digong Tang mi mantuluo zhi yanjiu* 法門寺地宮唐密曼荼羅之研究 (Hong Kong: Zhongguo Fojiao wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, 1998), 342-63. Also see Bogel, "Canonizing Kannon," 63 n. 143.

bodhisattva into the larger pantheon of "orthodox" Shingon that he created in Japan, when upon his return from China he eventually secured imperial patronage and established his brand of esoteric Buddhism as the most effective protector of the sovereign and nation. Kūkai brought several texts on Ruyilun and other esoteric forms of Guanyin from China, and also wrote about the bodhisattva in his own works. His *Shōrai mokuroku* 請來目録, a catalogue of texts he brought back from China, includes sutras called the *Ruyilun niansong fa* 如意輪念誦法 (J. *Nyoirin nenjihō*) and *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie* 觀自在菩薩如意輪喩伽 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin yuga*).[24] These sutras and his writings about Nyoirin focus on the six-armed form, while the two-armed form and the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* 如意輪陀羅尼經 (J. *Nyoirin darani kyō*) that features it are noticeably absent.[25]

A related factor that contributed to Nyoirin's importance in medieval Japan was the central place of her six-armed form among the esoteric "six Kannon" (J. *rokukannon* 六觀音, Ch. *liuguanyin*), which were worshipped in Japan from the Nara period onward and became objects of widespread devotion during the Heian and Kamakura periods. While there are many forms of Avalokiteśvara, both exoteric and esoteric, the esoteric or Tantric forms are those described in a set of texts translated mainly during the Northern Zhou (556-681) and Tang dynasties, concerning the promise of universal

---

[24] *KDZ* 1, 76 and 81. These two titles likely refer to the *Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni lun tuoluoni niansong fa* 觀世音菩薩如意摩尼輪陀羅尼念誦法 (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu nyoi mani rin darani nenju hō*), translated by Ratnacinta (Ch. Baosiwei 寶思惟, J. Hōshi'i, d. 721), *T.* 20, 1084; and the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie* 觀自在菩薩如意輪瑜伽 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin yuga*), translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛 (705-774), *T.* 20, 1086.

[25] Kūkai wrote extensively about Nyoirin's iconographic and ritual details, drawing on the canonical texts he brought back from China and probably also on oral teachings he received in China. See, for example, *Jihō kongō nenju shidai* 持宝金剛念誦次第, *KDZ* 2, 556-86, and *Jihō kongō nenju shidai gosaku* 持宝金剛念誦次第御作, *KDZ* 4, 774-93. "Jihō kongō" 持宝金剛 is one of the names that Kūkai used to refer to Nyoirin.

salvation and worldly benefits to be obtained through rituals involving mantra, *dhāraṇī*, *mudrā*, mandala, and visualization practices. In many of these sutras Avalokiteśvara offers the faithful powerful *dhāraṇī*, and no longer merely attends to and carries out the work of buddhas, but appears as a savior figure in his own right. These Tantric forms of Avalokiteśvara take various fantastical shapes, often with multiple heads, arms, and eyes. They include the "Noble" (Sk. Ārya, Ch. Sheng, J. Shō 聖), "Thousand-armed" (Sk. Sahasrabhuja, Ch. Jianshou, J. Senju 千手) or "Thousand-eyed" (Sk. Sahasranetra, Ch. Jian-yan, J. Sengen 千眼), "Eleven-headed" (Sk. Ekādaśamukha, Ch. Shiyimian, J. Jūchimen 十一面), and "Horse-headed" (Sk. Hayagrīva, Ch. Matou, J. Batō 馬頭), as well as "Pure" (Sk. Cundī, Ch. Zhunti, J. Juntei 準胝), who became strongly linked with Nyoirin in Japan, and "Fisher [of Human Beings]" (Sk. Amoghapāśa, Ch. Bukongjuansuo, J. Fukūkenjaku 不空羂索), who came to replace Juntei in the Tendai tradition.[26]

---

[26] For a detailed discussion of the rivalry between Shingon and Tendai over the "true" esoteric six Kannon, and the symbolic importance of Nyoirin Kannon within this milieu, see Hayami Tasuku 速水侑, *Kannon shinkō* 観音信仰 (Tokyo: Kōsenshō, 1981). For a general overview of the six Kannon, see Hayami Tasuku, ed., *Kannon shinkō jiten* 観音信仰辞典 (Tokyo: Ebisu kōshō shuppan, 2000).

The original Tendai notion of "six Kannon" had existed since the sixth century in China. Zhiyi 智顗 (J. Chigi, 538-597), founder of Tiantai Buddhism, was the first to systematize them in the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (J. *Makashikan)* or "Discourse on Mahāyāna Meditation and Contemplation," a series of lectures on Tendai methods of meditation given in 594 and recorded and edited by Zhiyi's disciple Guanding 灌頂 (J. Kanchō). See Hayami, *Kannon shinkō*, 121-22.

Zhiyi's list includes the following six: (1) Dabei 大悲 (J. Daihi), "Great Compassion," and according to Zhiyi, associated with the realm of hell; (2) Daci 大慈 (J. Daiji), "Great Mercy," associated with the realm of hungry ghosts; (3) Shiziwuwei 師子無為 (J. Shishimui), "Fearless Lion," associated with the realm of animals; (4) Daguangpuzhao 大光普照 (J. Daikōfushō), "Universal Illumination of Great Light," associated with the realm of *asura*; (5) Tianren zhangfu 天人丈夫 (J. Tennin jōbu), "Hero among Gods and Men," associated with the human realm; and (6) Dafan shenyuan 大梵深遠 (J. Daibon jinnon), "Great Sacred, Deep Voice," associated with the heavenly realm. According to Hayami, Zhiyi not only first systematized the names of these six Kannon, but also associated them with the six paths of transmigration. Summarizing the *Qing Guanyin jing* 請觀音經, or *Qing Guanshiyin pusa xiaofu duhai tuoluoni jing* 請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼經, Zhiyi emphasizes the efficacy of the "six-syllable mandala" to purify the root of the three poisons; he also associates the six syllables in the mandala with the six Kannon, who save sentient beings from the six realms of rebirth. For several centuries after that,

The notion of six esoteric Kannon in Japan owes much to the power struggles between Shingon and Tendai from the late Heian period onward, as does the popular notion—which in this study we will see clearly expressed in the fourteenth-century Tendai compilation *Keiran shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集—that the six-armed Nyoirin somehow embodied the work of all six Kannon. Hayami Tasuku 速水侑 has shown how from the tenth century onward Shingon and Tendai engaged in open religious competition, constantly struggling to outdo each other to provide new spiritual technologies that strengthened the authority of religious institutions and the court. In particular, the Ono Shingon patriarch Ningai 仁海 (951-1046) popularized the idea that the Shingon six Kannon represented the "original ground" (J. *honji* 本地) of the "manifest traces" (J. *suijaku* 垂迹) that were their Tendai counterparts. He linked the Shingon version of the six Kannon with the six realms of transmigration, and placed Nyoirin at the top of the hierarchy, equating her with salvation in the heavenly realm.[27] Shingon thus claimed to have exclusive rights of communication with the "real" six

---

however, these six Kannon remained a rather obscure side note in the history of Tendai, in both China and Japan. Ibid., 122-25.

Though the list of six Kannon changed, the notion that the six corresponded with salvation of those suffering in the six realms persisted in Japan. In the tenth century, the Shingon list of esoteric Kannon manifestations eclipsed Zhiyi's original list in aristocratic society.

Two studies of specific Tantric forms of Kannon are also worth mentioning here. Robert Van Gulik's 1935 monograph on Hayagrīva or Batō Kannon, the fearsome divine and demonic horse-headed form of the bodhisattva, seems to foreshadow Stein's method, as Van Gulik traces the semantic history of this deity, noting that such an approach is essential for the study of esoteric Buddhism because of the explicitly Indian origins of many of its deities, and because as it spreads it tends to borrow so freely from local cults. Van Gulik investigates a broad continuum of horse-headed deities and demonic and divine horses, from India to Japan. In her more recent studies of the Thousand-armed Kannon, Maria Reis-Habito, a meticulous philologist and historian, has closely analyzed the most important texts devoted to this deity, and as well as the worship of his *dhāraṇī* in central Asia, and the Song-dynasty repentance ritual devoted to this form of Kannon. See Robert Van Gulik, *Hayagrīva: The Mantrayānic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1935) and Maria Reis-Habito, "The Repentance Ritual of the Thousand-armed Guanyin," in *Studies in Central & East Asian Religions*, vol. 4 (Autumn 1991): 42-51.

[27] Hayami Tasuku, *Kannon shinko*, 62-63.

Kannon, over which Nyoirin presided. Ningai's teachings were attacked by the Tendai establishment, which then went on to appropriate the system for iteslf, only substituting Fukukenjaku for Juntei Kannon. Including these two rival Kannon, together this group forms the "seven Kannon" as they are still known in Japan today. In claiming possession of the "true" forms of the six Kannon and the power of Nyoirin's wish-fulfilling jewel, Shingon ultimately won out over Tendai by making itself indispensable to aristocratic society: once this new body of esoteric knowledge existed, no one could afford to live without it.[28]

As we have seen, the story of Nyoirin Kannon in medieval Japan rapidly unravels into several different cults, or mythological structures. In studying such phenomena, if we are too quick to impose an elaborate historical narrative, we may overlook less obvious internal structures that might otherwise emerge. In an influential essay in the

---

[28] Shingon rituals also employed the power of the six esoteric Kannon to achieve concrete worldly benefits, and also proved to be a stage upon which esoteric rivalries were played out. For example, Strickmann gives a vivid description of the "Ritual of the Six Syllables" (J. *rokujihō* 六字法), one important six Kannon rite, whose function was to dispel demons and harmful magical spells. See Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 265-67.

The earliest descriptions of the Ritual of the Six Syllables are found in eleventh-century Tendai handbooks, "when demonomania was reaching its height at the Heian court." The same ritual is also described in detail in the Shingon ritual-iconographic compendium *Kakuzen shō* 覺禪鈔, to which we will return later in this study. This ritual was said to be brought from China by the Tendai monk Ennin 圓仁 (794-864), in 847. In the ritual, which is performed with a *homa* fire made in a triangular hearth, the ritual specialist burns various substances, including iron filings, thornwood, toxic plants, and three figurines—a kite or "celestial fox" (J. *shinko* 辰狐, also translated as "astral fox"), an actual fox, and a woman with long unbound hair—representing a sorceress and her earthly envoys. Because this ritual resembles the Japanese Shinto *misogi* 禊 purification ceremony, some scholars speculate that it may be a Japanese creation. The Rokujikyō 六字經 chapter of the *Kakuzen shō* contains, along with a description of this ritual, a visual representation of the "six syllables," each associated with one of the six Kannon.

According to Strickmann, Shingon monks quickly appropriated this ritual, and Tendai responded by creating its own more elaborate version, which was to be performed on land for seven days and then moved onto a river in the middle of the night. The focus of the ritual was always the achievement of concrete benefits and protection against enmity or black magic. The rivalry between the Shingon and Tendai schools was played out here through a game of one-upmanship, creating ever more elaborate deities, cosmologies, and rituals.

structuralist mythology tradition that began with the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Stein proposes that we frame the study of deities precisely in terms of these mythological patterns.[29] The name of a deity may even be incidental to the structures it overlays. Stein suggests that we can observe in these mutations an underlying stability of structure, the expression of a kind of internal logic. Certain iconographic elements, for example, might be submerged and then reappear later in new forms, when scholarly monks or nuns revive them and add their own creative interpretations.[30] Stein's observations also imply that the outward causes of such transformations may be simpler or more concrete than we might at first imagine: the desires or fears of a powerful individual, the confusion of one symbol with another, the overlapping of two similar legends—all can give rise to far-reaching religious changes. Seemingly random processes thus become calcified into doctrinal form. Yet Stein may also be right in suggesting that the underlying structure of a set of beliefs may fully emerge only as it evolves through transmissions across time and space.[31]

Another metaphor by which to understand such transformations can be borrowed from linguistics. Linguists speak of a process of "iconic reduction" and "semantic

---

[29] Stein has demonstrated this method in both his extensive work on Avalokiteśvara and in a remarkable essay on the evolution of the Buddhist figure of the "guardian of the gate." See Rolf A. Stein, "The Guardian of the Gate," in Yves Bonnefoy, ed., *Asian Mythologies* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 122-36.

See also, for example, the seminal work by Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structuralist Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

[30] See Stein, "Buddhist Mythology," in Bonnefoy, ed., *Asian Mythologies*, 119-21.

[31] Stein identifies two central principles that underly this process. The first is incarnation, the idea that one deity has several forms, or a demonic as well as a divine aspect. In Japan this notion becomes explicit in the theory of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹, in which indigenous *kami* are understood as manifestations of Buddhist deities. Iconographic elements often serve as clues identifying one deity as an incarnation or emanation of another. According to Stein's second principle, the subduer takes the form of the subdued; that is, in a Hindu or Buddhist context, a foreign deity that appropriates the role of a local deity may take on his characteristics.

expansion" to describe the transformation of a pictographic symbol into a phonetic one, and a similar process takes place in the realm of religious myth.[32] In this process a "picture" is reduced to an abstract iconic form, while its range of meanings expands dramatically over time. In the evolution of a deity, we can think of this as a cyclic process, alternating between contraction and expansion, reduction to certain symbolic elements and expansion of the range of meanings the name implies. In the case of Nyoirin, we might say that in medieval Japan she was reduced to her attribute of the wish-fulfilling jewel, and that this jewel motif in turn expanded to signify a range of meanings: Buddha relics, priceless gems, imperial regalia, dragon jewels, symbols of both death (relics) and fertility or fecundity (rice, child-granting powers). These meanings then gave rise to newly specific concepts of Nyoirin, such as the jewel woman or the dragon goddesses with which she merged.

Though this study was initially inspired by the structuralist approach to mythology, it also employs a post-structuralist point of view, as well as a historical one. From a structural angle, it seeks certain underlying patterns in groups of deities, of which the possession of a wish-fulfilling jewel is the most central theme. On the other hand, it engages in just the opposite kind of post-structuralist pursuit, as it takes what appears to be a single entity—the bodhisattva called Ruyilun/Nyoirin—and shows how this name describes not an individual but a number of fluctuating situations, and thus in itself lacks any kind of structural continuity. At the same time, these phenomena are

[32] Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *Mysteries of the Alphabet: The Origins of Writing,* trans. Josephine Bacon (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1999), 102-3.

discussed in a chronological framework, and this study draws on historical explanations to help explain the bodhisattva's various transformations.

As we trace the unfolding of Nyoirin's career in Japan, we should also keep in mind that a reading of such varied developments in Nyoirin's idealized image also affords us access to texts and doctrines spanning several centuries that people living in medieval Japan did not have. Thus we run the risk of creating a distorted picture of what the bodhisattva was to her devotees in Japan. Those devotees, whether lay or monastic, also probably never stopped to ask themselves questions about how Nyoirin's identity was being transformed. To them she was a powerful image, a wish-granting entity, and for monks one of many bodhisattvas in the pantheon whose ritual segments were to be mastered on the path to esoteric initiation.

This dissertation consists of three parts, which take as their starting point the "jewel woman" passage of the *Kakuzen shō*. They represent an attempt to progressively "unpack" this development by seeking to understand Nyoirin's transformations and particularly her feminization in Japan from the late Heian through the Muromachi periods. Part I follows the "jewel woman" thread in the Ono branch of Shingon, tracing Nyoirin's development within this school, her merging with various female deities, and her parallel emergence as a goddess of worldly benefits and favorite object of worship for women, who offered a unique set of rituals for achieving love, fertility, and salvation. Part II turns to an examination of the Tang Chinese textual sources for these beliefs, with a focus on the "person" of Ruyilun Guanyin that emerges in them, particularly his iconography, physical manifestations, and promises to devotees. Here it becomes clear that indeed these texts found new interpretations and ritual uses in Japan.

In Part III, we return to medieval Japan to examine Nyoirin's development within esoteric Tendai, particularly within the Sannō Shintō 山王神道 tradition on Mt. Hiei 比叡 that is expressed in the fourteenth-century esoteric "encyclopedia" called the *Keiran shūyōshū*. Here what began as a process of "metonymic drift" is expressed as a complex set of local, hybrid beliefs dressed up and displayed in highly elaborate doctrinal Buddhist garb.

As we proceed, we will see that these developments took on a life of their own. It is impossible to pin down Nyoirin's identity because it was always shifting, so we must rather study these drifting currents of mythological change—how they are subject to both spontaneous and calculated influences, and how seemingly insignificant elements can be imbued with powerful new meanings. This initial research only touches the surface of the changes occurring in medieval Japan, and so we will content ourselves with attempting to "uncover" rather that "cover" our topic, the many lives of Nyoirin.

Part I. Goddess Genealogy in the Ono Shingon Tradition

Taking Nyoirin's rebirth as the "jewel woman" as the starting point for its investigation, this chapter seeks to identify the forces that catalyzed her transformation in Japan. As it turns out, this instance was not the first or the last time Nyoirin would take the form of a goddess. In fact she has a long history of such manifestations in the Ono branch of Shingon, the tradition within which the *Kakuzen shō* emerged.

Here we will first briefly examine the "jewel woman" motif in medieval Japan, and then look at the section of the *Kakuzen shō* within which the Nyoirin-as-jewel-woman passage is embedded, in order to understand its meaning in the original context. We will then look back at several key moments in which Nyoirin took feminine forms within the Ono branch of Shingon, beginning with the legends surrounding the Ono patriarch Shōbō 聖寶 (832-909). I will argue that Nyoirin Kannon can be understood not as a single entity but rather as a shifting field of associations, a screen onto which certain historical forces were projected. In the late Heian and Kamakura periods, the promise of both collective and individual worldly benefits drove her popularity to its height, while the cults of indigenous deities, or *kami*, likely provided the power needed to achieve those results. Nyoirin gave a Buddhist voice and name to these liminal powers, which in turn charged her with a new identity in Japan.

Wish-granting women, imperial jewels

Japanese scholars have long recognized that Shinran's dream, whether consciously or unconsciously, drew on a broader preexisting tradition of the jewel woman consort. This passage in the *Kakuzen shō* arguably represents a decisive moment in the "feminization" of Nyoirin in Japan, yet it was only one of her many manifestations in goddess form. The jewel woman has both Indian and Chinese roots, and like Nyoirin she owes much of her importance in medieval Japan to the resonance of her jewel with that of the imperial regalia. Her identification with Nyoirin as a piece of secret lore was probably passed down orally long before it was written down in the *Kakuzen shō*. Rather than speaking of Nyoirin's feminization, it may be more accurate to describe this phenomenon as an encounter from which both deities had much to gain—the jewel woman a legitimate Buddhist counterpart, and Nyoirin nothing less than the sovereign's devotion.

These developments were linked to *cintāmaṇi* worship, which became influential at court from the Heian period onward. In fact, Brian Ruppert has demonstrated that the jewel probably did not take its place as one of the three imperial regalia until the tenth century. Then it became increasingly important because of the influence of Shingon-sponsored *cintāmaṇi* rites at the palace, particularly a ritual dedicated to Kannon that was begun (or possibly revived) sometime during the tenth

century, the "Kannon Offering" performed in the Futama 二間 area of the imperial palace, in which Nyoirin Kannon was worshipped along with Jūichimen Kannon.[1]

The term "jewel woman" (or "jade woman") occurs frequently in Tang Chinese texts, and as Tanaka has shown in an illuminating article on this subject, in Chinese literature it most often refers merely to a beautiful woman, or to a Daoist immortal, while in Japan this figure took on more complex layers of identity.[2] In Daoism, jewel or jade women were also worshipped as star deities, stars incarnate, often associated with the Northern Dipper.[3] It is not clear precisely when or how the term entered Japan, but it probably arrived in Daoist texts, specifically Yin-Yang divination texts. One of the earliest extant Japanese texts linking the jewel woman to imperial authority appears in a tale in the tenth-century *Sanbō ekotoba* 三宝絵詞 collection, in which a prince journeys to the palace of the dragon king in search of a wish-fulfilling jewel that will produce great riches to save his people from hunger. When he arrives at the dragon king's palace, he discovers that it is guarded by poisonous serpents and jewel women.[4] There is also, of course, the famous passage in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra in which the dragon king's daughter attains buddhahood and offers a priceless jewel to

---

[1] Brian Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, nos. 1-2 (Spring 2002): 2-4 and 6-11.

[2] Tanaka Takako 田中貴子,"'Gyokujo' no seiritsu to genkai: 'Jishin oshō musōki' kara 'Shinran no muki' made" 〈玉女〉の成立と限界―『慈鎮和尚夢想記』から『親鸞夢記』まで, in *Jōsei to bukkyō* 女性と仏教 4: *Miko to joshin* 巫女と女神, ed. Ōsami Kazuo 大隅和雄 and Nishiguchi Junko 西口順子 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989), 99-104.

[3] See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 131-48.

[4] Tanaka, "'Gyokujo' no seiritsu to genkai," 99. See also Edward Kamens, *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's* Sanboe (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988), 119. Kamens translates the term simply as "beautiful women."

Śākyamuni.[5] In Japan the jewel woman also came to bestow imperial legitimacy more explicitly through female sexuality.[6] Given her sovereign associations there, it is also worth noting that a "jewel woman" appears in the much older Indian list of the seven jewels (Sk. *sapta-ratna*, Ch. *qibao* 七寶, J. *shichihō*) or possessions of the *cakravartin*, which include a golden wheel, white elephant, dark blue horse, divine jewel, jewel woman, merchant-artisan, and military commander.[7]

In his research Faure has discussed this set of interlocking mythological complexes—*cintāmaṇi*, *nāga*, jewel women, imperial consorts—that finds expression not only in the lore surrounding Nyoirin but in the worship of other goddesses in medieval Japan.[8] He shows the ambiguity of the jewel woman, who at first appears to be a positive figure providing both salvation and imperial legitimization, but who is at the same time trapped within an ideology that renders her both powerful and powerless, existing only "in the gaze of men."[9] The proliferation of goddess figures is an important theme in medieval Japanese Buddhism, and Faure has also proposed the intriguing idea that as the androcentric religion of institutional Buddhism came to dominate local cults in Japan, these local deities took on a subordinate role that in some cases led to their "feminization."[10]

---

[5] *T.* 9, 262, 34b23-35c26. See also Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 187-89.
[6] It may be that in East Asia the *cintāmaṇi* motif also derives from the Indian list of "eight auspicious objects" (Sk. *aṣṭamangala*), dating to the first century of the Common Era if not earlier, popular in Tibetan Buddhism—the conch, endless knot, golden fish, victory banner, lotus, parasol, treasure vase, and wheel of dharma. Like the *cakravartin*'s list, this one likely originated with kingship and coronation rites.
[7] Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 206. Ruppert notes that this list appears in the *Dīrghāgama sūtra* (Longer Āgama-sūtra).
[8] Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 205-10.
[9] Ibid., 210.
[10] Bernard Faure, conversation with the author, January 28, 2003.

In the midst of these developments, the jewel woman came to occupy a place of great importance in the medieval imagination. In the twelfth century we find several famous recorded instances of monks dreaming of jewel women as a source of imperial power through sexual union. In Shinran's dream, Guse 救世 ("world-saving") Kannon appears in the form of a monk, but promises that if he, Shinran, must "violate women," the bodhisattva will take the form of the jewel woman, stay with him for a lifetime, and lead him to the Pure Land. Shinran had this dream on the ninety-fifth night of a hundred-day retreat in the temple known as the Rokkakudō 六角堂, said to be founded by the legendary Buddhist patron Prince Shōtoku, or Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574-622).[11] The protagonist of the *Kakuzen shō* passage is the sovereign, while in Shinran's dream it is a monk, which is not surprising given that sovereigns were often ordained as monks, particularly during the Insei period (late 11th to late 12th centuries).

Other dreams about jewel women from around this time are more explicitly associated with the mirror, sword, and jewel of the Japanese sovereign. The Tendai prelate Jien 慈圓 (1155-1225), the Kegon patriarch Myōe 明慧 (1173-1232) and the Shingon monk Chōgen 長源 (1121-1205) all reported famous dreams of jewel women. In Jien's dream, the sword "penetrates" the jewel to produce the mirror, symbol of Amaterasu, and he equates this sexual union with that of the deities Ichiji Kinrin and Butsugen Butsumō 佛眼佛母 (Ch. Foyan Fomu, Sk. Buddha-locanā). As Faure has

[11] Tanaka, "'Gyokujo' no seiritsu to genkai," 92-95 and 111-21. In effect, Kannon takes the form of a child monk reminiscent of a *chigo* 稚児 or child acolyte, a form in which Prince Shōtoku was often depicted and worshipped. Tanaka shows how the image of the jewel woman was like both mother and lover, giving both maternal affection and sexual love. She notes that wet nurses often played such a role; in some cases a young prince would take his wet nurse as his first lover. Though courtesans seemed to enjoy a relatively high status in medieval Japan, this image in Shinran's dream does not necessarily represent a celebration of the feminine. In fact, Tanaka suggests that his dream is distinctly homoerotic, centering on the *chigo* figure that stands for Prince Shōtoku.

pointed out, in the *mikkyō* pantheon these two are considered to be male and female aspects of the same deity, and thus the pair symbolizes both the sovereign and the female reproductive power of his consort.[12]

In a similar case, in 1221 Myōe reported that he had dreamed of a cold, white noblewoman who approached him in a sexual way but to whom he felt no attraction, to the point that he actually asked her to go away. Myōe, of course, seems to have remained a celibate monk throughout his life. In his account of this dream the woman holds a sword and mirror, though no jewel is mentioned, and Tanaka has suggested that in this instance the woman herself fills the structuralist role of the jewel.[13]

The monk Chōgen also claimed to have had two auspicious dreams when he came to Ise 伊勢 Shrine in 1186 to pray for the successful reconstruction of Tōdaiji 東大寺. In his account of the first dream, the deity of Ise appears to him and says that she had become weak and he must nourish her back to health. Chōgen subsequently enshrines the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra (J. *Dai hannya kyō* 大般若經, Ch. *Dabanruo jing*, Sk. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*) and recites it before her. She then appears in a second dream, in which she grants him one red jewel and one white, both of which he awakens to find in his hands, and later installs in the head of the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji.[14] As Ruppert has shown, by the Kamakura period the shrine at Ise

---

[12] Faure, *The Power of Denial,* 207-8. For Faure's discussion of the jade woman motif in the dreams of Shinran, Jien, and Myōe, see 205-10.
[13] Tanaka, "'Gyokujo' no seiritsu to genkai," 106-8.
[14] See Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine," 13. In its reference to construction at Tōdaiji, this story echoes a famous *Sanbō ekotoba* tale about Nyoirin, Zaō Gongen, the completion of Tōdaiji and the founding of Ishiyamadera, which we will look at in some depth later in this dissertation. See Minamoto no Tamenori 源為憲 (ca. 941-1011), *Sanbō ekotoba*: *Sanbōe shūsei—Shohon taishō* 三宝絵詞ー三宝絵集成ー諸本對照, ed. Koizumi Hiroshi 小泉弘 and Takahashi Nobuyuki 高橋伸幸 (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1980), 314. See also Kamens, *The Three Jewels,* 328.

was believed to contain Buddha relics, which were also identified with the jewel of the imperial regalia.[15]

This motif of Nyoirin Kannon as an enchanting consort continued to flourish. In one story that appears in the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書—the first official history of Buddhism in Japan, completed in 1322—Kūkai himself carves a wooden sculpture of Nyoirin Kannon in the image of Nyoi 如意, a beautiful imperial consort who becomes a nun.[16] After Nyoi, a consort of the sovereign Junna 淳和 (786-840 r. 823-833), has a mysterious vision of Benzaiten, she goes off to the mountains, where Kūkai teaches her various rites associated with Benzaiten and the *cintāmaṇi*. In 831 she completes the great hall of the temple Jinjuji 神呪寺 and becomes a nun; at her request, Kūkai carves the temple's statue of the bodhisattva Nyoirin Kannon in her image.[17] Nyoi also receives two imperial visits at her mountain retreat—first from Junna, who returns to the palace without her, disappointed, and then from the sovereign Ninmyō 仁明, his successor (810-850, r. 833-850). As Faure has suggested, like the "jewel woman" story, these visits tie the Nyoirin/consort figure to a quest for imperial legitimacy, in which the sovereign paradoxically seeks to draw his power from a transgressive female figure.[18]

Whether or not this story is true, it points to a devotional relationship between aristocratic women and Nyoirin Kannon that probably had a basis in fact. Cynthea Bogel has drawn attention to the work of a group of Japanese scholars who have posited

---

[15] Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine," 11-19.

[16] See Marian Ury, "Nuns and Other Female Devotees in *Genkō shakusho* (1322), Japan's First History of Buddhism," in *Engendering Faith*, ed. Barbara Ruch (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002), 196-200.

[17] The Shingon temple Jinjuji (also pronounced Kannōji), is located in what is today the city of Nishinomiya 西宮, in Hyōgo 兵庫 prefecture. The temple claims that the Nyoirin statue it houses today is none other than this legendary image carved by Kūkai.

[18] Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 209-10.

that the celebrated ninth-century image of Nyoirin at Kanshinji, the oldest extant Nyoirin sculpture in Japan, likely owed much to the patronage of Empresses Saga, or Tachibana no Kachiko 橘嘉智子 (785-850), wife of Kūkai's great patron Saga 嵯峨 (786-842, r. 809-23), and Saga's daughter the Dowager Empress Junna, or Princess Seishi 正子 (809-879).[19] Indeed, in an essay on the iconographic development of Nyoirin in Japan, Inoue Kazutoshi 井上一稔 presents good reasons to believe that the Kanshinji image, at least, was already viewed as feminine when it was created in the ninth century.[20] Perhaps his most convincing argument is that the statue's features are strikingly similar to those of court ladies depicted in Tang Chinese paintings, with their plump faces, swept-up black hair, small lips, thick curved brows, and long slivers of half-closed eyes. Inoue shows how the same Tang ideal of beauty is reflected in images of the goddess of fortune Kichijōten that were produced in Japan around the same time, in which she also holds a *cintāmaṇi* symbolizing fecundity and wealth, as in the famous Heian-period painting of this deity at Yakushiji[21]; representations of Nyoirin and Kichijōten suggest a mutual influence.[22] Inoue also notes that images from around the same period of the legendary imperial consorts Nakatsuhime 仲津姫 and Empress

---

[19] Bogel discusses research indicating that the quality of this statue suggests imperial patronage, and furthermore that documents showing that Empress Saga dedicated a hall at the temple in 850, and Dowager Empress Junna provided for its upkeep, are significant in that the two empresses likely influenced the making of the image itself. In a written communication to the author on April 22, 2003, Bogel further suggested that the empresses' patronage may have had something to do with image being viewed as feminine as early as the ninth century. See Bogel, "Canonizing Kannon," 46-47.

[20] Inoue Kazutoshi 井上一稔, "Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō" 如意輪観音像・馬頭観音像, *Nihon no Bijutsu* 日本の美術 312 (May 1992): 28-30.

[21] This painting of Kichijōten is said to be modeled on the features of the empress Kōmyō 光明 (701-760), wife of the sovereign Shōmu 聖武 (701-756, r. 724-749).

[22] In some later images the two even appear together, as in one well-known twelfth-century Japanese painting in which Nyoirin is attended by Kichijōten, who also bears a wish-fulfilling jewel, along with the gods Vasu Rṡi and Indra. See Helen B. Chapin, "A Study in Buddhist Iconography," in *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift,* ed. Otto Kümmel and William Cohn (Berlin and Leipzig: Verlag Von Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1932), illustration plate I.

Jingū 神功皇后 are shown with Hachiman 八幡 at Yakushiji 薬師寺 in the ancient capital of Nara 奈良, seated in the same "royal ease" posture as Nyoirin Kannon. This posture, though widespread and not thought of as particularly feminine in India and Central Asia, is less common in Japan, and may have been linked at the time in people's minds with those well-known female images. Inoue and other scholars have even speculated (rather fancifully) that the Kanshinji Nyoirin statue may reflect the empress's likeness, as she was said to have had long arms that extended past her knees, long thick hair, and a strange otherworldly aura.[23]

In any event, these examples show that the Nyoirin-*gyokujo* combination was only one permutation of a pattern that emerged with many variations in medieval Japan, which enlarged Nyoirin's reputation as a granter of wishes for power and love. Another prominent example of this phenomenon appears in the first tale of the collection *Kojidan* 古事談, compiled by Minamoto no Akikane 源顕兼 from 1212 to 1215, about the infamous Nara-period (710-784) politician and monk Dōkyō 道鏡 (d. 772). When the Empress Shōtoku 聖徳 (718-770) fell in love with the self-interested monk, she promoted him all the way up to the unprecedented rank of "dharma king" (J. *hōō* 法王), at which point he might even have taken over as sovereign had irate members of the aristocracy not intervened. A lesser-known element of this story is the "open secret"—as Abe Yasuro puts it—of Dōkyō's success, which appears in the *Kojidan* version of the story (and therefore may well have been in circulation much earlier), the assertion that Dōkyō was able to win the empress's love because in a past life he had practiced the

[23] Inoue, "Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō," 29.

"Nyoirin rite," an esoteric ritual devoted to Nyoirin Kannon.[24] While Dōkyō is famous for having worshipped the Usa Hachiman 宇佐八幡 to achieve his ultimate goal of becoming sovereign, here it appears that he had other allegiances too: according to this story his devotion to Nyoirin won him not only the empress's love but also unprecedented political power, for a short time at least.[25] Whether or not Nyoirin was the cause of his success with the empress, Dōkyō is elsewhere alleged to have practiced austerities and the Nyoirin rite in the Katsuragi 葛城 mountains, and was said to develop supernormal powers as a result.[26]

Dōkyō was only one of many Nara-period "healer" monks who employed magical powers obtained through their recitation of *dhāraṇī* and practice of esoteric rites, and according to the *Shichidaiji nenpyō* 七大寺年表, after practicing austerities and the "Nyoirin rite" in seclusion on Mt. Katsuragi, he was also able to cure Empress Kōken 孝謙 of an illness by means of esoteric star rituals.[27] The Nyoirin rite also seems to have been used for healing in the imperial palace; in one case, in 756 several healer monks were praised for having cured the sovereign Shōmu of an illness through practice of the Nyoirin *dhāraṇī*, among others.[28] Dōkyō is one of a number of mountain ascetics practicing around that time in the Katsuragi mountains, where the miracle-

---

[24] Minamoto no Akikane 源顕兼, *Kojidan* 古事談, in *Kokushi taikei* 国史大系, vol. 15 (Tokyo: Keizai zasshi sha, 1904), 1. See also Abe, "Hōju to ōken," 122-23.
[25] See also Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 50-53.
[26] Hayami Tasuku 速水侑, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō* 平安貴族社会と仏教 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan,1975), 6. The Katsuragi mountains, located on the border of what are now Osaka and Nara prefectures, were a place of practice for mountain ascetics by the eighth century if not earlier. According to an account in the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 (797), En no Ozuno 役小角 (fl. late seventh century), a.k.a. En no Gyōja 役行者, famed as the "founder" of Shugendō 修験道, was believed to have practiced there. See Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準, *The Mandala of the Mountain: Shugendō and Folk Religion*, ed. Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2005), 47-48.
[27] Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, 5-6.
[28] Ibid.

working ascetic mountain religion called Shugendō 修験道 is believed to have originated, and it was no accident that Nyoirin later emerged as one of the most important deities in the Ono branch of Shingon, which had strong ties to Shugendō.

By the Kamakura period if not earlier, then, Nyoirin had made a name for herself in Japan that had no Tang Chinese precedent. Later in this dissertation we will take a closer look at the Chinese translations of texts concerning Nyoirin, in order to better understand how she was (at least ideally) worshipped in China, and the raw materials from which her new identity was forged in Japan. She is an example of a deity that was radically transformed by the process of *shinbutsu shūgō* 神佛習合, the "joining of gods and buddhas," the endless play of mythological combinations and recombinations that pervades medieval Japanese religion.

A Shingon encyclopedia

The *Kakuzen shō* belongs to a genre of ritual-iconographic texts that began to appear from the late Heian period onward, lengthy "encyclopedias" of lore surrounding various deities catalogued for the benefit of those who performed their rituals. The late twelfth-century Shingon text *Besson zakki* 別尊雑記 and the thirteenth-century Tendai text *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄, as well as the fourteenth-century Tendai compilation *Keiran shūyōshū*, are all examples of such texts, and each contains extensive sections on

Nyoirin that we will return to later in this study.[29] These works appear to be concerned above all with achieving maximum ritual efficacy, which was of utmost importance to both Shingon and Tendai monks in the atmosphere of intense religious competition in the later Heian and Kamakura periods. Though on the surface these texts appear to catalogue the "orthodox" Buddhist texts and images surrounding these deities, they also reveal many new developments that occurred only in Japan. Their fragments of "top secret" esoteric knowledge, often passed down as oral transmissions (J. *kuden* 口傳), can tell us much about how these changes occurred.[30]

As I mentioned earlier, Nyoirin took on particular importance within the Ono branch of Shingon, one of the two main branches of the sect. While the Hirosawa 廣澤 branch drew most of its clergy from aristocratic families and tended to focus more on the formal details of ritual practice, Ono priests often came from humbler families, and Ono ritual was more concerned with cultivating mystical experience and supernatural powers.[31] This lineage flourished in the area of southeastern Kyoto called Ono, part of

---

[29] See Shinkaku 心覺 (1117-1180), *Besson zakki* 別尊雜記, *T.* Zuzō 3; Shōchō 承澄 (1205-1282), *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄, *T.* Zuzō 9, 3190; and Kōjū or Kōshū 光宗 (1276-1350), *Keiran shūyōshū*, *T.* 76, 2410.

[30] For a set of illuminating essays that help to locate the *kuden* tradition in the larger context of secret practices and lineages in Japan, see Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[31] See Kasahara Kazuo 笠原一男, ed, *A History of Japanese Religion*, trans. Paul McCarthy and Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2001), 109-11.

The Ono branch of Shingon split into two groups: 1) the three Daigoji subschools (J. Daigo *sanryū* 醍醐寺三流) based at Sanbōin 三寶院, Rishōin 理性院, and Kongōōin 金剛王院, all subtemples of Daigoji, and 2) the Three Kanjuji 觀修寺 (or Kajuji) subschools (Kanjuji *sanryū* 觀修寺三流) based at Kanjuji, Anjōji 安祥寺, and Zuishin'in 隨心院 in Yamashina 山科, north of Daigoji. The Hirosawa school was founded by Yakushin 益信 (827-906), the seventh abbot of Tōji 東寺, through the retired sovereign Uda 宇多 (867-931, r. 887-897), his disciple; the name Hirosawa comes from a pond by that name in the northwestern part of Kyoto, where Yakushin's third-generation disciple Kanchō 寛朝 founded Henjōji 遍照寺 in 989. The Hirosawa branch later split off into six sub-schools, four of which were based at subtemples in Ninnaji 仁和寺, while the other two were based at temples in Yamato and Kii 紀伊 provinces. Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough, eds., *Heian Japan*, vol. 2 of *The*

what is now Yamashina ward, the area where Ningai established its main temple, Mandaraji 曼荼羅時 (later Zuishin'in 随心院) in 991, not far from where the original Ono patriarch Shōbō had founded Daigoji. Many Ono monks were famous for their thaumaturgic talents: Shōbō was known for his powers of exorcism and was later venerated as a patriarch of the Tōzan 当山 branch of Shugendō; and Ningai, a great Shingon scholar, fourth-generation disciple of Shōbō, and de facto "founder" of the Ono branch of Shingon, was renowned for his rainmaking abilities.

Despite its mountain ascetic tendencies and outsider status, or because of them, beginning in the tenth century the Ono branch of Shingon began to find favor with the court, particularly during the Insei period.[32] Brian Ruppert has written extensively on how Ono monks' expertise in the production of *cintāmaṇi* and the practice of rituals surrounding them helped establish their position at court; he identifies a lineage of Ono monks who performed the aforementioned "Kannon Offering" rite at the palace, which

---

Cambridge History of Japan, ed. John Whitney Hall et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 503.

Though most of the medieval Shingon the rites dedicated to Nyoirin are no longer performed today, she still holds a special place in the Sanbōin lineage of the Ono tradition, as the principle deity in its Jūhachidō 十八道 or "eighteen methods," the first set of rituals mastered by novice monks. Robert Sharf is one of the few scholars to have explored the actual use of these images in Tantric ritual, particularly one with Nyoirin as its main deity that figures prominently in the Juhachidō manual for new initiates in the Sanbōinryū lineage. Sharf argues that an image of Nyoirin (or any esoteric deity) depicted in a mandala does not directly correspond with the complex succession of rapidly transforming images and contemplations described in the ritual manual itself, and suggests that such images are not used, as is commonly believed, as visual aids to contemplation, but rather are taken by practitioners (both modern and medieval) as actual living presences. See Robert H. Sharf, "Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism," in Robert H. Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf, eds., *Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 157-66. For a full treatment of Sanbōin lineage rituals, see Takaii Kankai 高井観海, *Mikkyō jisō taikei—tokuni Sanbōin kenshinpō o kichō to shite* 密教事相体系—特に三寶院憲深方を基調として (Kyoto: Takaii zenkashū chosaku kankōkai, 1952).

[32] See, for example, Kinugawa Satoshi 衣川仁, "Inseiki no mikkyō shihō to hōgen" 院政期の密教修法と法験, and Matsumoto Ikuyo 松本郁代, "Toba shōkōmyōin hōzō no 'Goyuigō' to hōju: inseiki onoryū no shingon mikkyō" 鳥羽勝光明院宝蔵の『御遺告』と宝珠—院政期小野流の真言密教, in *Kakuzen shō no kenkyū* 覚禅抄の研究, ed. Kakuzen shō kenkyūkai 覚禅抄研究会 (Kōya: Shinnōin Gyōei Bunko, 2004), 301-29 and 349-77.

was dedicated to Nyoirin and Jūichimen Kannon, in which the *cintāmaṇi* played a central role. These monks included, among others, Shōbō's direct disciple Kangen 観賢 (854-925), as well as Kangen's disciple Kangū 寛空 (884-972), who performed the first rite before the Kannon figure placed in the imperial palace in 962, and also the Daigoji monk Gengō 元杲 (914-995), Ningai's master, who was renowned for his knowledge about Nyoirin.[33]

Nyoirin seems to have held a special place in this milieu because of her wish-fulfilling jewel. Among the earliest records of the worship of Nyoirin within Shingon are the writings of the palace monk Shunnyū 淳祐 (890-953), Kangen's disciple and Gengō's master, and grandson of Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道眞 (845-903). Shunnyū later retired to Ishiyamadera 石山寺 because of an illness and devoted himself to the worship of Nyoirin Kannon there. His writings suggest that he was also involved in the worship of wish-fulfilling jewels in connection with Nyoirin.[34] Ono monks did much to promote relic worship, and rituals for transforming relics into *cintāmaṇi*. According to an entry in the *Shōyūki* 小右記, the diary of Fujiwara no Sanesuke 藤原実資, Gengō led the performance of the *tsugomori go-nenju* 晦御念誦 recitation in the Shingon *cintāmaṇi* chapel of the palace in 988, a rite described in twelfth-century texts that enshrines Nyoirin as its main deity, and involves visualization of the relics Kūkai was said to have buried on Mount Murō 室生.[35]

---

[33] Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine," 2-4, 6-11.
[34] Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 146-7 and 428 n. 18.
[35] See Eien 永延 2.2.27 entry for Fujiwara no Sanesuke 藤原実資, *Shōyūki* 小右記, vols. 1-3 of *Shiryō taisei bekkan* 『史料大成』別巻, 99 vols. (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1965). Quoted in Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 132-33 and 424 n. 94.

For our purposes it is also significant that female patrons were instrumental in the performance of rituals involving Buddha relics or wish-fulfilling jewels.[36] By the mid-Heian era, aristocratic women often sponsored relic rites, perhaps because these rites offered them a means of attaining Buddhist salvation that other practices did not. By the Kamakura period women appear to have taken on a custodial role in the worship of relics, which by then had become powerful symbols of imperial authority. Relics were particularly important in prayers for pregnancy and safe childbirth for empresses and imperial consorts.[37] We will return to this theme later in this study in the context of Ishiyamadera, a temple near the shore of Lake Biwa 琵琶湖 that was a major site of aristocratic pilgrimage during the Heian period, particularly for the purpose of praying for male heirs, safe childbirth, and other worldly benefits.

Out of this jewel-worshipping, miracle-working Ono tradition came the monk Kakuzen (1143-ca. 1213), of Kanjuji 観修寺 (also called Kajuji), who is said to have spent decades traveling around Japan collecting textual references, oral transmissions and commentaries to include in his Shingon manual, compiled between 1176 and 1213, and his lengthy chapter on Nyoirin Kannon draws on a broad range of sources. Kakuzen's two main teachers were Kōzen 興然 (1121-1203) and Shōken 勝賢 (1138-96).[38] Kōzen, also of Kanjuji, was the author of the *Gojukkanshō* 五十巻鈔, a similarly vast collection of ritual and iconographic lore whose tradition Kakuzen passed down in his own compilation.

---

[36] See Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 193-229.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Shōken became abbot of Daigoji in 1160, but later fled to Mt. Kōya, and then returned to Daigoji; he also later served as abbot of both Tōji and Tōdaiji, and was known for his many disciples.

The first half of the Nyoirin chapter of the *Kakuzen shō* gives instructions for rituals involving recitation of Nyoirin's *dhāraṇī*, and explains the symbolism of her six arms and their attributes, while the second half consists mainly of a list of specific benefits the devotee can expect to gain, and a catalogue of iconographic sketches. One of Kakuzen's most important sources of information on Nyoirin Kannon, which he refers to simply as "the sutra," is the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing,* attributed to Bodhiruci and dated 709 C.E.[39] *Dhāraṇī* sutras constitute a vast category of texts that offer concrete instructions for practitioners to obtain both worldly and otherworldly benefits, including detailed procedures for performing rituals and visualizations.[40] Michel Strickmann speculates that *dhāraṇī* sutras like this one were "efficient texts" that must have circulated among those to whose needs they corresponded, laypeople as well as monks and nuns.[41] According to Strickmann and other scholars, the earliest function of the *dhāraṇī* was probably as a mnemonic device to aid in the memorization of highly technical doctrinal passages, and only later were these phrases personified and deified, functioning as magically efficacious spells to bring worldly benefits and summon deities. In Tang China, using *dhāraṇī* to achieve practical results became extremely popular, and blended with similar Daoist practices.[42]

---

[39] *T.* 20, 1080.

[40] See Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 50-51.

[41] Michel Strickmann, "The Consecration Sūtra: A Buddhist Book of Spells," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha,* ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 75-118. Cited in Yü, 51.

[42] John Kieschnick recounts one story of our text's translator Bodhiruci, stirring a well with a tooth-cleaning stick and casting a spell, causing the water to bubble up to the top of the well. Bodhiruci warns, however, against becoming foolishly fixated on such miraculous phenomena. See Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 88-89.

The whole *Kakuzen shō* reveals a special emphasis on ritual efficacy, which is not surprising given the importance of producing tangible results for the various schools of Shingon—they were proof positive of spiritual attainment, and the currency by which religious worth was measured. Nowhere is this emphasis more apparent than in the chapter on the wish-fulfilling Nyoirin, who is famed particularly for her ability to confer supernormal powers upon her devotees, which have much to do with the efficacy of any ritual. It is worth noting that the first (ritual) half of the Nyoirin chapter is enclosed at its beginning and end by two identical citations of a statement that spells out Nyoirin's promise of such attainments: According to the monk Ken'i 兼意 (1072-after 1145), of the temple Henjōkōin 遍照光院 on Mt. Kōya 高野山, the Chinese monk Bianhong (J. Benkō 辨弘, ca. 790) attained supernormal powers (Ch. *xidi* 悉地, J. *shijji*, Sk. *siddhi*) as a result of his practice of the "Nyoirin yoga."[43]

A catalogue of fears and wishes

Given this general theme of ritual efficacy, it is significant that our "jewel woman" passage appears in the midst of a list of worldly benefits. Because the benefits a bodhisattva grants are always changing according to sentient beings' needs and capacities, such a list might be a good place to look for evidence of how a deity's cult has developed over time. Kakuzen's list cites several benefits from the original sutra,

[43] *DNBZ* 47, 152b and 176a. The "Nyoirin yoga" mentioned here likely refers to the rituals described in two texts, the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, *T.* 20, 1086, and the *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao* 觀自在如意輪菩薩瑜伽法要 (J. *Kanjizai nyoirin bosatsu yuga hōyō*), *T.* 20, 1087. Kakuzen quotes extensively from the latter text in his chapter on Nyoirin.

along with a few new ones. The two texts themselves cannot tell us anything about how they were actually used in China or Japan, and they belong to very different genres, one a classic Mahāyāna narrative, the other a ritual handbook and digest of esoteric lore. Still, their descriptions of worldly and spiritual blessings to be gained offer clues about how this bodhisattva's image had been transformed over four centuries in Japan. They suggest that it was perhaps Nyoirin's versatile wish-granting talents above all that led to her widespread appeal.

Kakuzen's list of benefits is presented as a series of brief sets of promises or techniques for attaining certain results. They fall into three main categories: miscellaneous practical benefits, benefits having to do with sex and reproduction, and spiritual benefits. The miscellaneous benefits are most numerous and scattered throughout the list, and explain how to deal with everything from unlucky stars to evil spirits, thieves, and poisonous insects. They tell how to gain supernatural powers; attain immortality; prolong one's life; be loved by the sovereign; win military battles; make it rain, or stop wind and rain; and solve problems caused by "astral and earthly foxes." They give cures for anxiety, sick people who run around naked, and malignant boils, among other ills. In the midst of this list, the "jewel woman" passage is the first to deal explicitly with women and sex, and is followed by instructions for gaining the ardent love of a woman, conceiving children, easing difficult childbirth, and arousing or extinguishing lust. The last few items incline toward more spiritual concerns—the multitudes suffering in hell being born in heaven, extinguishing the five deadly sins, attaining wisdom, realizing buddhahood and seeing the Pure Land in this life, seeing the buddhas of the ten directions and Avalokiteśvara, and being born in the Pure Land.

That such different types of benefits are listed side by side tells us something right away about the text compiler's attitude toward them. All appeal to earthly or spiritual human needs. Of some thirty items listed, most are cited from two texts: fifteen from the *dhāraṇī* sutra, and twelve—including the "jewel woman" passage—from a text whose name is given only as the *Beppongi* 別本軌 ("separate rule"). Iyanaga Nobumi has noted the peculiarly sexual nature of the items drawn from this obscure text, now lost and cited in only one other place Iyanaga has been able to identify, in a text written by Kakuzen's teacher Kōzen. Because this text's quoted contents do not correspond with any of the Tang Chinese texts about Nyoirin, and refer to various substances to be used in rituals that have no Sanskrit equivalent, as well as to "astral and earthly foxes"[44]—a motif characteristic of late Heian Japan—Iyanaga has concluded through this process of textual sleuth-work that the *Beppongi* was probably a Japanese creation of the late Heian or early Kamakura period.[45]

The other text Kakuzen cites, the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, was one of the first sutras devoted to Nyoirin to make its way to Japan, and is the most complete version of a text that also survives in several shorter translations; Kakuzen's text cites Bodhiruci's translation as well as that of Yijing 義淨 (635-713).[46] The sutra is narrated in the typical style of a "proto-Tantric" Mahāyāna text, in which Avalokiteśvara appears

---

[44] See *DNBZ* 47, 183a.

[45] See Iyanaga, *Kannon henyō tan*, 577-87.

[46] See *Foshuo guanzizai pusaruyixin tuoluoni zhou jing* 佛說觀自在菩薩如意心陀羅尼呪經(J. *Bussetsu kanjizai bosatsu nyoishin darani ju kyō*), translated by Yijing 義淨 (J. Gijō, 635-713), *T*. 20, 1081; *Guanshiyin pusa bimizang ruyilun tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 觀世音菩薩祕密藏如意輪陀羅尼神呪經 (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu himitsuzō nyoirin darani shjinju kyō*), translated by Śikṣānanda (Ch. Shichanantuo 實叉難陀, J. Jisshananda, 652-710), *T*. 20, 1082; and *Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni tuoluoni jing* 觀世音菩薩如意摩尼陀羅尼經 (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu nyoimani darani kyō*), translated by Ratnacinta 寶思惟 (d. 721), *T*. 20, 1083.

before Śākyamuni and teaches his powerful spell to sentient beings, and then gives instructions for its recitation, followed by lists of benefits the the practitioner will attain. Next the sutra describes a series of esoteric hand gestures or *mudrā,* the layout of a mandala in the form of a thirty-two-petalled lotus blossom, and prescriptions for three types of medicine—medicine to be worn at the waist, medicine to be held in the mouth, and medicine for the eyes, along with their respective benefits. The text concludes with a Tantric fire ritual (Ch. *humo* 護摩, J. *goma*, Sk. *homa*) and recapitulation of the spell's power.

Near the beginning of Kakuzen's list, almost as though to justify the selections he has included from these two texts, he quotes a passage from the sutra promising the bodhisattva's devotees that both "worldly (J. *seken* 世間) and spiritual (J. *shusseken* 出世間) desires will be perfectly accomplished."[47] Indeed, in the sutra, worldly and spiritual benefits are woven together in a hyperbolic, repetitive style that seems to promise everything a person could dream of, in this world or beyond it. These lists serve not only as prescriptions for success, but also as descriptions of the vast power of the spell, which is due to the bodhisattva's boundless compassion. Not only will the practitioner's every wish be accomplished, but (in case he had not thought of everything he might want) he is told he will achieve wealth, fame, happiness, health, liberation, deliverance from demons, visions of Avalokiteśvara, and rebirth in the Pure Land, to name only a few.

At times the *Kakuzen shō* takes passages that may play a narrative or descriptive role in the sutra, and presents them in an extremely practical light. One example is "The

[47] *DNBZ* 47, 179a-b.

multitudes suffering in hell being born in heaven"—an item that appears in Kakuzen's list right after selections on how to cure malignant boils and how to avoid falling into evil ways, and is followed by techniques for extinguishing deadly sins and attaining wisdom, all matters of practical interest.[48] Kakuzen cites short passages from two translations of the sutra, Bodhiruci's and Yijing's, to convey the essential information on this point: when Nyoirin's spell is recited, the great earth trembles, demons' palaces are disturbed, all the hells open their gates, and all the sentient beings inside suffering retribution for their sins are freed and born in heavenly realms, where they attain a state of peace and bliss.[49]

Kakuzen's selection is condensed from a dramatic scene in the sutra that occurs at the moment the bodhisattva recites his wondrous spell. Bodhiruci's version in particular offers a more elaborate description of what happens at that moment: the mountains, forests, and six realms tremble, and then all the palaces of the gods, *nāga*, *yakṣa*, *rākṣasa*, *gandharva*, *asura*, *garuḍa*, *kimṇara*, and *mahoraga* tremble and shake. The many classes of evil and powerful demons, gods, and obstacle-creating *vināyaka* all tremble with fear. Great fires break out in demon palaces and temples, the demon king and his attendants become terrified, and all the lowly evil female demonic counterparts (*nāga* girls, goddesses, demonesses, and female *yakṣa*, *rākṣasa*, *gandharva*, *asura*, *garuḍa*, *kimṇara*, and *mahoraga*) become terrified and stamp upon the earth in sorrow and confusion, after which all suffering sentient beings are liberated from hell.[50] The sutra celebrates the spell's earth-shattering effects against evil in every realm of

[48] *DNBZ* 47, 183b.
[49] Ibid.
[50] *T.* 20, 1080, 189a7-17. For more on this standard list of Indian demons, see Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 62-68.

existence—earthly, demonic, and divine—while Kakuzen's text focuses on human happiness and redemption. In the *Kakuzen shō*, the scene is taken out of its dramatic context, and its useful information extracted: people suffering in hell can be freed through recitation of the spell. We see a shift here, then, from the cosmic to the human scale.

Another selection in Kakuzen's list of benefits, "Eye Medicine," is a paraphrase of the eighth chapter of the *dhāraṇī* sutra, and appears here between items on prolonging one's lifespan and being loved by the sovereign.[51] Kakuzen's abridged version gives the recipe for a medicine to cure eye ailments (to be made with lotus blossoms, ox bezoar, saffron, nutmeg, and camphor, among other substances), and then describes how it is to be rubbed on the bottoms of the bodhisattva's feet, the three different versions of Nyoirin's mantra are to be recited 108 times, and finally the practitioner is to smear the medicine on his eyes. The first time he does this, all eye problems will vanish; the second time various types of headache and fever will disappear; the third time all illnesses caused by the 84,000 demons will be healed; the fourth time all obstacle-creating *vināyaka* and demons will quickly depart.[52] If he continues faithfully with this practice, he will be able to extinguish the five deadly sins, see heavens, buddhas, and bodhisattvas, and purify his five senses.

The items Kakuzen includes here too appeal directly to the fears and aspirations of the devotee, and again it may be worth noting what he has left out. The original "Eye Medicine" chapter of the sutra contains a much longer list of astounding supernatural

---

[51] *DNBZ* 47, 180a-b.
[52] In Buddhist texts the number 84,000 suggests "many" or "incalculable."

visions the practitioner will experience when he performs the ritual correctly. In the sutra, these visions serve not only as promises of results to be achieved, but also to illustrate the world-transforming power of the bodhisattva's spell. In them, among other wonders, the hordes of demons who earlier fled in terror now reappear to enact a kind of happy ending to their story, converted to benevolent protectors. The fourth sequence of seven times that the medicine is smeared on the eyes, "all *yakṣa* and female *yakṣa* will gather in your household, and humbly attend and serve you as you wish," and the fifth seven, "all *rākṣasa* and female *rākṣasī*, all *asura* and female *asura*, all *nāga* and female *nāga*, will freely and humbly attend and serve you."[53] Subsequent visions depict many different types of bodhisattvas, gods, and demons as protectors, their palace gates now open, all their activities rendered visible.In the sutra we are clearly dealing with a spell that has the power not only to scare off demons, but to convert them to joyful and pious guardians of the Buddhist dharma. Kakuzen's list omits the demons' conversion; here too, he seems less interested in the fate of demons, and more concerned with solving the immediate problems they cause.

The rituals Kakuzen cites from the *Beppongi* are even more practical. Suddenly we are in a world of homely folk remedies. The first item quoted from the *Beppongi* list is called "Gaining the ardent love of the sovereign"; it is followed by rites for rain-making and stopping wind and rain, and then by the famous "jewel woman" passage we looked at earlier.[54] Several rites that have to do with love, sex, and childbirth follow. For example:

---

[53] *T.* 20, 1080, 195b8-11.
[54] *DNBZ* 47, 180b-182a.

> Gaining the ardent love of a woman: If one wishes to gain the ardent love of a woman, take one *go* 合[55] of white mustard seeds and recite [the *dhāraṇī* over them] 108 times. Cast them upon her name. Then one will obtain a jewel woman [and a] child-sovereign.[56]

This rite, in which our "jewel woman" once again appears, is followed by instructions for conceiving a child:

> Rite for having children: If there is a woman who has no children and desires a child, take seven red lentil [beans], and recite [the *dhāraṇī* over them] 1080 times. Take [them] and pregnancy will be accomplished. The male [child] born [will be] unobstructed in eloquence, his merit and wisdom [will be] complete, and [he will be] fully endowed with an official salary. Men and gods will love and respect him. Those who see him will rejoice, and those who hear [of him] will want to see him.[57]

And then this one:

> If a woman is unable to give birth, [she should] recite [the *dhāraṇī* over] hyssop grass 108 times and take it. Then she will give birth without any obstruction.[58]

---

[55] One *go* is equal to about .18 of a liter.
[56] Ibid., 182a. The meaning of the word "child-sovereign" here is unclear, but it may refer to the birth of an heir.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Other passages deal with similarly earthy matters, such as one that tells how to arouse lust: "Take one *go* of the white sap of a real white mulberry tree, take two go of alcohol, combine, and recite [the *dhāraṇī* over it] 108 times. If you follow [these instructions], [lust] will immediately be aroused."[59]

The next technique in the list is equally practical but displays an element of Buddhist piety that the previous item does not: "Extinguishing lust. It also says: If a child of the Buddha wishes to cut off lustful desire, take flowers and water and recite the mantra [over them] 1000 times. Wash the genitals. Lustful desire will be completely extinguished, and the great bodhisattva mind will arise . . ."[60] Though the "great bodhisattva mind" is mentioned, it is not really the point. Even the spiritual benefits listed here are quite practical, while the practical benefits betray a spiritual interest only when it is convenient.

Kakuzen's list of benefits reveals, then, some remarkable developments. Compared to the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, the scope has narrowed in some ways and broadened in others. The sutra's Mahāyāna ideal of universal compassion has been set aside for the moment, and the *dhāraṇī*'s power has been turned to the accomplishment of specific human aims. Yet within this realm, a new dimension has opened up: the physical person of the bodhisattva (which was androgynous or male and not particularly emphasized in the sutra) is transformed into the "jewel woman" of the sovereign, and at the same time Nyoirin has added to her repertoire several benefits related specifically to women and

[59] Ibid., 182b.
[60] Ibid.

sex. Our brief survey of one section of Kakuzen's text raises many questions that remain unanswered: Why did Kakuzen select and abridge these passages as he did? Why, as Iyanaga has suggested, did Kakuzen grant equal authority to the canonical Tang translation of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* and an obscure text that seems to be cited nowhere else, except in a single text composed by his own teacher? And were any of these rituals actually practiced in medieval Japan, by monks, nuns, laymen or laywomen?

What we can say is that many of the themes visible here indicate bigger changes that were already underway. Though much less is known about the worship of Ruyilun Guanyin in China, it is clear that in the turmoil of medieval Japan the bodhisattva offered a highly practical appeal. This list of benefits in the *Kakuzen shō* is a small piece of evidence that hints at Nyoirin Kannon's new position within the medieval Japanese esoteric landscape, as a powerful agent of both earthly and spiritual redemption. By the early years of the Kamakura period, she was in the right place at the right time to make a few wishes come true—wishes for protection from demons, wealth, power, fertility—and perhaps even a few monks' wishes for a beautiful woman who would lead them straight to the Pure Land.

The revelations of Juntei-Nyoirin

Early in the course of Shingon monastic training, novice monks are required to study the *Kakuzen shō* as a guide to the many deities they must (theoretically, at least) learn to visualize. The monks' study of iconography, however, is only a first step. At the Ono

Shingon temple of Daigoji, near Kyoto, one monk recently explained to me that a deity does not become "one's own buddha," and therefore one has not mastered the practice of visualization, until one has personally met the deity face to face. "Of course, not everyone is able to achieve that," he added with a shrug. It is true that Shingon Buddhists have often expressed such experiences through images, which accounts for the almost psychedelic variations in the iconographic forms of Shingon deities.

Leaving aside the question of whether or not monks actually experience the presence of the deities they must ritually commune with, the Daigoji monk's explanation reveals a tension that is central to the study of any religious tradition, but particularly that of esoteric Buddhism—the tension between doctrinal authority and the authority of personal revelation. The negotiation of the two is a major theme in the Ono branch of Shingon, with its characteristic system of secret oral transmissions, or *kuden*, passed down from master to disciple. Through esoteric Buddhism, the doctrine of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (lit. "original substance and manifest traces") not only brought countless *kami* into the Buddhist fold and turn them into guardians of the dharma, but also allowed local cults to take shelter under the protection of Buddhism, and animate it with new sources of secret knowledge.

Devotion to Nyoirin gained momentum in Japan as she took on various feminine identities and was absorbed into a new esoteric pantheon, and I would argue that her transformations in Japan owe much to the visions of Shōbō—also known as Rigen Daishi 理源大師, retroactively deemed the founding patriarch of the Ono branch of Shingon—as they have been passed down and recorded within that tradition. Famed as the founder of Daigoji, Shōbō is also known as the restorer of the Tōzan branch of

Shugendō; in fact, he is said to have constructed images of Nyoirin and other deities on Mt. Kimpu, or Kimpusen 金峰山 ("Golden Peak"), a major Nara-period center of Shugendō. In light of Nyoirin's *Kakuzen shō* identification as the jewel woman (with her Onmyōdō associations), her reputation for granting worldly benefits, and the likelihood that she was worshipped as part of proto-Shugendō practices on Mt. Katsuragi as early as the eighth century, Shōbō's connection with Nyoirin becomes even more significant. As we will see, a strong link between Nyoirin and Zaō Gongen 藏王權現, the main deity of Shugendō, lends further support to the hypothesis that Nyoirin worship evolved not only within the Ono branch of Shingon, but also through that group's close ties with Shugendō.

To investigate how Nyoirin's worship developed in these circles, we will now look back in time from the late twelfth-century *Kakuzen shō* to an earlier text, the tenth-century *Daigoji engi*, because it sheds light on some of the earliest developments surrounding Nyoirin in Japan. In the *Daigoji engi* legend, Shōbō discovers what he considers to be a holy site at the top of Mt. Kasatori 笠取, southeast of Kyoto, where he has several mysterious encounters with deities and subsequently founds Daigoji, a temple from which the Ono lineage later emerged. As I mentioned earlier, Shōbō was an accomplished scholar-monk who was also renowned for his supernormal powers, and the *Daigoji engi*, whose earliest extant manuscript (housed at Daigoji) dates to 937, reports the alleged details of how he came to found the temple on that site.[61]

[61] *DNBZ* 117, 246a-252b. See also Saeki Arikiyo 佐伯有清, *Shōbō* 聖宝 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1991), 80-108 and 204-17.

Several incidents recorded in this early text are echoed in a late Heian work, the *Daigo zōjiki* 醍醐雑事記, compiled in 1186 by Daigoji abbot Keien 慶延 (12th century), and a collection of Heian and Kamakura temple documents, dating from the founding of the temple though the Keichō 慶長 era (1596-1615), edited by Daigoji abbot Gien 義演 (1558-1626), the *Daigoji shinyōroku* 醍醐寺新要録, both of which we will return to shortly.[62] For the temple's founding legend, however, a moment that marks Nyoirin's first recorded adventures in Japan, the *Engi* itself is the earliest extant source.

Shōbō had studied Shingon under Kūkai's brother Shinga 眞雅 (801-879), as well as the doctrines of the Sanron 三論, Hossō 法相, Kegon 華厳, and Ritsu 律 schools in the great temples of Nara.[63] From his youth he was known for his powers of exorcism. According to one account he was assigned to live in a haunted room at Tōdaiji, but when the demons that lived there could not rattle him they ran away.[64] Another time he encountered two large snakes on Mt. Ōmine 大峰山 who were known for devouring travelers; he was able to convert the male but not the female, so he ended up having to kill her.[65] When he was about 30 he moved to Kyoto and took up a life of wandering and religious practice in the surrounding mountains and forests. In 874 he began construction of two halls on Mt. Kasatori, one dedicated to Nyoirin Kannon and

---

[62] See Keien 慶延 (12th century), *Daigo zōjiki* 醍醐雑事記, ed. Nakajima Shunji 中島俊司 (Kyoto: Daigoji, 1932); and Gien 義演 (1558-1626), *Daigoji shinyōroku* 醍醐寺新要録, 2 vols., ed. Daigoji bunkazai kenkyūjo 醍醐寺文化財研究所 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1991).

[63] That is, Shōbō was trained in four of the six major philosophical schools of Nara Buddhism, which include Sanron ("Three Treatises," or Mādhyamika), Hossō (Yogācāra), Kegon (Ch. Huayan, "Flower Garland," devoted to study of the Huayanjing or *Avataṃsaka sūtra*), Ritsu (Ch. Lü, Sk. Vinaya), Kusha 倶舎 (named for Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*), and Jōjitsu 成実 (named for Harivarman's *Satyasiddhi*).

[64] Saeki, *Shōbō*, 10.

[65] Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 316-17.

the other to Juntei Kannon, as well as images of the two deities to be enshrined in the halls. The work was completed in 876, and so Daigoji was founded that year; later the sovereign Daigo 醍醐 (885-930; r. 897-930) patronized the temple and enlarged it with the construction of several new halls.[66]

In the *Engi* text, Shōbō wanders from one holy mountain to another, searching for a site that will be suitable for protecting and passing down the Buddha dharma for a long time into the future. He often engages in prayer to this end for seven days at a time, and one day his prayers are answered: he witnesses a five-colored cloud hovering at the peak of a mountain, now Mt. Kasatori, in Uji 宇治, south of Kyoto.[67] He climbs the mountain and is there overcome with a joyful feeling of having returned home. He is preparing to build a monastery there when he sees an old man in a valley drinking from a stream. The old man praises the water as having "the flavor of ghee" (J. *daigoimi* 醍醐味).[68] When Shōbō asks him if it would be an auspicious place to propagate the Buddha-dharma for a long time, he speaks about the virtues of the site as a place where Buddhas have practiced in the past, and hints that it could even be the place where Maitreya (J. Miroku 彌勒, Ch. Mile) will appear in a future age. The old man then reveals that he is actually Yoko'o Daimyojin 横尾大明神, the earth god of the mountain. He has been practicing there as a layman for many years, and wishes to help protect and promote the spread of the Buddha-dharma. Upon pronouncing this wish, the old man disappears. Shōbō is moved to tears by this encounter.

---

[66] See Saeki, *Shōbō*, 80-92.

[67] *DNBZ* 117, 246a.

[68] Ibid. The "flavor of ghee" symbolizes the purest and highest form of Buddhist truth, in a metaphor attributed to Zhiyi regarding the "five flavors," which stand for the five levels of truth, represented by milk (Tripitaka), cream, curds, butter, and ghee, with ghee symbolizing the Lotus Sutra.

The *Engi* then recounts a second mysterious encounter Shōbō experiences on the mountain. He first has two images made, of Juntei and Nyoirin, and then builds a hall for them, though the actual reason for his initial devotion to these two Kannon is not given. This is how the text tells it:

> In the beginning, on the first day of the sixth month of Jōgan 貞觀 16 (874), the wood for making [images of] Juntei and Nyoirin, as well as that for the main images of [other] halls, was consecrated and cut with an axe, and the first pillar-base was erected. On the eighteenth day of the sixth month of Jōgan 18 [876], the carving of Juntei and Nyoirin was fully accomplished. Then Juntei stood up, walked, and entered the inner altar. Nyoirin was also enshrined in the Juntei Hall. Of her own volition she climbed up the eastern peak and sat down on a stone. On the mountain, [Shōbō] gathered moss and built a hall [for her], and out of great devotion began to worship her without ceasing, day and night. Then Nyoirin spoke to the honored teacher, and said: This mountain is Mt. Potalaka, and this hall is the center of Mt. Potalaka. It has a stone with diamond treasure petals. I sit upon this [stone] and contemplate the suffering and joy of the sentient beings of the ten worlds. Day and night, I take away their suffering and give them happiness.[69]

According to this account, Shōbō initially builds only one hall, called the Juntei Hall. Juntei walks into the hall and takes her place there, while Nyoirin, who is also enshrined in the hall, slips out and takes her place on a rock, where she proclaims her compassion for all sentient beings. Awestruck, Shōbō worships her day and night. This encounter is

[69] *DNBZ* 117, 246b. In Buddhist texts, Potalaka is the paradise where Guanyin is believed to dwell.

said to account for his special devotion to Nyoirin Kannon as a universal savior, and for her prominence within the Ono tradition.[70]

As the scholar Saigo Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 has pointed out, Kannon often takes a feminine form in settings on mountain cliffs, particularly when the local earth god, displaced by Kannon's arrival, makes an appearance in a legend.[71] Kannon worship has long been associated with cliffs and mountains, as well as caves and bodies of water, and in Japan by the tenth century Kannon was rapidly "consuming" traditions and territories that had belonged to local earth deities.[72] These deities lingered, however, and often showed up in miracle tales that illustrated Kannon's work in their lands. Saigo also makes the important point that local mountain, water and earth deities were often feminine, which naturally led to the manifestation of Kannon in these places in feminine forms. The tales of the legendary origins of not only Daigoji but also of Ishiyamadera seems to manifest both these patterns, and older cults on these sites likely contributed to her "feminization" in Japan.

In the *Daigoji engi*, Shōbō's initial act of devotion to Juntei and Nyoirin is not explained until the text goes on to narrate a revelation on the mountain that is said to have occurred in 902, about 26 years after the original hall was completed and the two

[70] While it is well known that Shōbō's act of devotion set in motion the popular careers of these two bodhisattvas in Japan, it is less clear why he chose these two from among the various esoteric Kannon that were known in Japan by that time; but one possibility is that the two display a striking iconographic similarity to each other. Both Nyoirin and Juntei are frequently depicted holding a *cintāmaṇi* in front of the chest, though in Nyoirin's case one (often of three) right hands hand holds the jewel, and in Juntei's one of (often nine) left hands does. Both also hold a *cakra* aloft with one left hand. While other esoteric Kannon may also be shown holding jewel or wheel attributes, the resonance among the attributes of these two Kannon suggests that here again Nyoirin's jewel may have helped draw her into a new web of iconographic associations in Japan. See Inoue, "Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō," and also Asai Kazuharu 浅井和春, "Fukukenjaku, Juntei Kannon zō" 不空羂索・准胝観音像, *Nihon no Bijutsu* 日本の美術 382 (March 1998): 1-98.
[71] See Saigo Nobotsuna 西郷信綱, *Kodaijin to yume* 古代人と夢 (Tokyo: Heibonsha,1972), 90-98.
[72] Ibid.

images enshrined, which sheds further light on the meaning of that initial building project. In this encounter, the deity Seiryō Gongen appears to Shōbō on the mountaintop and explains that she is a manifestation of both Juntei and Nyoirin.[73] Though Seiryō Gongen is clearly feminine, she also states that those burdened with "heavy defilements" will not be allowed on the mountain, which is not a very female-friendly statement.[74]

This episode does shed further light on Shōbō's devotion to the two Kannon: they are the "original substance" of the local goddess. Seiryō Gongen explains that she is the third daughter of the dragon king Sāgara—that is, the father of the famous dragon girl who attains Buddhahood in the Devadatta chapter of the Lotus Sutra, only that dragon girl is his second daughter, and this one is his third. She tells how she began her career as a dragon guarding the temple Qinglongsi 青龍時, the main esoteric Buddhist temple in Changan 長安 where Kūkai had studied under his teacher Huiguo 惠果 (J. Eka, 746-805). She explains how she desperately wanted to take the esoteric *sanmaya* 三昧耶 (Ch. *sanmeiye*, Sk. *samaya*) precepts, but Kūkai would not allow it.[75] When he was about to leave the country she followed him to the harbor, begging him until he finally gave in. Overjoyed, she boarded the ship and guarded it as it traveled across the ocean all the way to Japan.

---

[73] *DNBZ* 117, 247b-248a.

[74] *DNBZ* 117, 248a.

[75] Ibid., 248b. The dragon deity hoped to receive the precepts that directly precede one of the highest forms of esoteric transmission. The *samaya* (enlightenment) precepts are taken in preparation for receiving *denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂, the fourth of five types of *kanjō* 灌頂, or esoteric initiation, with the fifth being the highest. The first three types of *kanjō* involve making offerings to a mandala, the ritual of throwing a flower onto mandala to discover one's karmic association with a particular deity, and establishing an affinity with a particular master; *denbō kanjō* is the direct transmission of esoteric truth from master to disciple, which makes the recipient himself an esoteric master; these may also be followed by a fifth type of special or secret *kanjō*.

She had then made her way to Mt. Kasatori, in order to bring blessings to the land. She goes on to recount that she first alighted on its southern peak, when an old man appeared and told her she was too visible in that spot. "There is a lofty peak to the east, and you should dwell there," he told her. Perhaps in light of Saigo's observations, we might read this statement as his not wanting to relinquish his own territory too easily. In any case, she moved to that peak, and dwelled there for a long time. She says that in the Great Tang her name was Seiryū 青龍 ("blue/green dragon," also translated as "black dragon"), but here she was "named for water" as the text says, and indeed the water radical is added to both characters of "Seiryū" to get the name "Seiryō" 清瀧 ("pure waterfall"), which of course also calls to mind Kannon's traditional association with water. She now guards the esoteric Buddhism that Kūkai had brought to Japan, and seeks to bring benefits to sentient beings of the corrupt future world.[76]

Here we have the dragon deity Seiryō Gongen, then, proclaiming both Juntei and Nyoirin as her own "original ground" or true form, in classic *honji suijaku* fashion—though the rather unusual converging of two Buddhist deities as the original ground for one *gongen* calls attention here to the merged identities of the two Kannon. This story lends significance to Shōbō's initial devotion to Nyoirin and Juntei: first the two Kannon images come alive and exert their own wills in determining where they will be placed and worshipped on the mountain, and then Seiryō Gongen comes along and announces that she is their local avatar, which almost appears to explain the statues' earlier miraculous behavior. It is significant that Shōbō has a vision of Seiryō Gongen,

---

[76] Ibid.

yet makes images only of Nyoirin and Juntei, an act that perhaps reflects a concern for Buddhist orthodoxy.

Despite her Buddhist pedigree, Seiryō Gongen likely reflects a cult that already existed on Mt. Kasatori. *Gongen* or avatars are syncretic deities that were sometimes created as emanations of Buddhist deities, but often they served rather to clothe local cults in Buddhist garb. Dragon or snake deities, in their original Indian form, are often female in Japan and symbolic of worldly desires, and may also represent local deities that have been subjugated and converted to benevolent guardians of Buddhism.[77] Of course they are famous for possessing wish-fulfilling jewels, and Nyoirin's jewel may have played a role here in linking her with Seiryō Gongen. Seiryō Gongen's tale also bears a strong resemblance to the famous tale of a Chinese girl named Shanmiao 善妙 (J. Zenmyō), who fell in love with the Korean monk Ŭisang 義湘 (625-702). When he had boarded a ship to sail home she threw herself into the sea and miraculously turned into a dragon that followed the ship all the way to Korea. This story was later popularized in Japan by the Kegon monk Myōe, who believed himself to be a reincarnation of Ŭisang.[78] As we will see, Seiryō Gongen appears in two iconographic forms, either as a beautiful woman similar to Kichijōten holding a wish-fulfilling jewel, or as a two-headed snake symbolizing the two Kannon.[79]

---

[77] Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 316-24.

[78] Ibid. Faure has written about the sublimation of sexual love into religious devotion in Shanmiao's story, although in the legend of Seiryō Gongen the dragon's motivation appears to have been religious from the start. Zenmyō's legend is told in the thirteenth-century *Kegon engi emaki* 華嚴縁起絵巻. See Myōe 明恵 (1173-1232), *Kegon engi emaki* 華嚴縁起絵巻, in Kameta Tsutomu 亀田孜, ed., *Kegon engi* 華厳縁起, vol. 7, *Nihon emakimono zenshū* 日本絵巻物全集, ed. Tanaka Ichimatsu 田中一松 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1959). For more on Zenmyō and Seiryō Gongen in their various iconographic forms, see Inokuchi Taijun 井ノ口泰淳 et al., *Mikkyō no hotoketachi* 密教のほとけたち, Kōza mikkyō bunka shirizu 講座密教文化シリズ, no. 3 (Kyoto: Jinbun Shoin, 1991), 238-43.

[79] Inokuchi et al., *Mikkyō no hotoketachi*, 240-41.

It was through Seiryō Gongen that Nyoirin merged with Juntei Kannon, one of the only esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara that was already known as female in India and China, and had long been known for granting her devotees conjugal happiness, fertility, and safe childbirth, among other blessings.[80] Like Nyoirin, Juntei owes her public image in Japan first to Shōbō's devotion, and later to Ningai's popularizing efforts. Unlike Nyoirin, in Tang Chinese texts she is clearly identified as feminine. As Robert Gimello has noted in a rich essay on this deity, Juntei appears as the tamed and converted Buddhist form of an ogress (Sk. *yakṣiṇī*).[81] According to Gimello, the name "Cundī," the East Asian transliteration of her Indian name Cundā, denotes lower-caste female ("prostitute or procuress") status. Sutras refer to her as *fomu* 佛母 in Chinese (J. *butsumo*), literally "Buddha mother," which has often later been read as "mother of buddhas," but which may originally have meant simply "goddess," a translation of the Sanskrit *bhagavatī* or *devī*. Given her identification in our *Engi* text with Seiryō Gongen, it is also interesting that in her earlier Indian incarnation Cundī was known for her power to subdue serpents, and in the description of her iconography in the same *dhāraṇī* sutra, she is depicted seated on a lotus throne held up by the dragon kings Nanda and Upananda, who appear in a pool of water beneath it.[82]

One important clue to the process that led to Nyoirin's "feminization" in the Ono tradition, then, is the long history of her entwinement with the indisputably female

---

[80] On the Indian origins and iconography of Juntei Kannon, see Asai, "Fukukenjaku, Juntei Kannon zō."

[81] See Robert M. Gimello, "Icon and Incantation: The Goddess Zhunti and the Role of Images in the Occult Buddhism of China," in *Images in Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 249-50 n. 1.

She may even be a manifestation of the ferocious child-eating demoness Hārītī, "mother of demons," later worshipped in bodhisattva form as a bestower of children. See Louis Frédéric, *Buddhism* (Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1995), 178.

[82] Gimello, "Icon and Incantation," 227 and 252 n. 7.

figure of Juntei/Cundī. Indeed, according to a passage in the *Daigoji engi,* Juntei specializes in granting children; the text says that after Daigo commissioned Shōbō to pray in the Juntei Hall (J. Junteidō 准提堂) for an heir to the throne, the sovereigns Suzaku 朱雀 (923-952, r. 930-946) and Murakami 村上 (926-967, r. 946-967) were born as a result.[83] In the Heian period Daigoji became one of several major pilgrimage sites where members of the imperial family went to pray for safe childbirth or male heirs.

Two Kannon, yet not two

The most explicit image of the merging of Nyoirin and Juntei Kannon appears in the *Daigoji shinyōroku,* in a text that illustrates and expands on their union as it is described in the *Engi* tale. This document, which probably dates to the mid-Kamakura period, illustrates the actual physical union of the two Kannon within the Daigoji tradition of esoteric transmission. It is the first item that appears in a catalogue of lore about the Seiryō Gongen shrine at Daigoji.[84] Titled "Mystery" (J. *shinpi no koto* 神秘の事), it opens by quoting a secret oral transmission that says that Seiryō Gongen, the dragon goddess, is actually the dragon king. The text goes on to say that Juntei and Nyoirin Kannon are Seiryō Gongen's original ground; this source adds that just as the two bodhisattvas are one, so also principle (J. *ri*) and wisdom (J. *chi*)—which correspond to

[83] *DNBZ* 117, 247a. A similar statement appears in *Daigoji zōjiki,* 6.
[84] *Daigoji shinyōroku,* vol. 1, 397-98. The dating of many individual documents in this collection is unclear, but this section appears in the midst of several others that date to the mid-Kamakura period, and the latest dates it contains are mid-Kamakura, so I suspect that it was likely composed around that time.

the Womb and Vajra realms—are "not two," that is, not separate from one another.[85] This phrase *ri chi fu ni* ("principle and wisdom are not two" 理知不二) is directly quoted from the *Daigoji engi*, which also employs it to show the oneness of Juntei and Nyoirin.[86]

"The two Buddhas Juntei and Nyoirin are the nondual body of the *kami*," says the text, and it goes on to warn that this matter is most secret and must never be communicated to outsiders.[87] The image of a two-headed snake accompanies the text, which further explains that the stupa above the snake figure represents the "manifest trace" (J. *suijaku*) body of the one *kami*.[88] Though the "union" of two deities could be read in a Tantric context as a symbolic sexual union of male and female energies, this image suggests a different kind of unity. In effect, this passage and image together cast the *gongen* in the role of "original ground" in her own right (in fact, she is actually none other than the dragon king himself). This way of presenting things, with the *kami* representing the nondual enlightened perspective, also implies that Nyoirin and Juntei do not represent the deepest truth—rather, the avatar, the *kami* in whose form they are united, stands for that ultimate reality.

In this secret text, then, which no doubt reflects an older tradition, despite the stated *honji suijaku* relationship between kami and bodhisattvas, the real order of things appears to be reversed: it is the kami, not the bodhisattvas, that stands for the deepest, most powerful esoteric truth.

---

[85] While in the *Daigoji engi* Nyoirin corresponds to the diamond realm (J. *kongōkai* 金剛界, Sk. *vajradhātu*) and Juntei to the womb realm, the *Shinyōroku* has it the other way around, which is one example of the mutable nature of such revelations.
[86] *DNBZ* 117, 248a.
[87] *Daigoji shinyōroku,* vol. 1, 397.
[88] Ibid., 398.

The two-headed snake is not the only form in which the two Kannon appear to have merged. Key elements of their ritual lore may also have converged over time as they were worshipped side by side in the Shingon pantheon.

One of the most compelling examples of this mythological "transference" appears in the Nyoirin chapter of the *Kakuzen shō* that we examined earlier, when we compare it not only with Tang Chinese texts concerning Nyoirin as we did before, but also the Tang texts dedicated to the goddess Juntei Kannon. Here we find intriguing evidence that certain elements of the lore surrounding the two bodhisattvas did merge. As we have seen, the union of the two Kannon is important because it may help explain not only Nyoirin's feminization in Japan, but also her special appeal to women as an object of worship. The rituals for love, fertility, and safe childbirth that are quoted in the *Kakuzen shō* from the obscure text referred to only as the *Beppongi* may in fact have come from texts devoted to Juntei. Though no such rituals appear in Tang translations of Ruyilun texts, similar ones do appear in the Tang texts concerning Zhunti, as well as in the Juntei chapter of the *Kakuzen shō*, which quotes them.

In particular, one of the main sutras devoted to Zhunti, the *Qijuzhi fomu suoshuo zhunti tuoluoni jing* 七俱胝佛母所説准提陀羅尼經 (J. *Shichikutei butsumo shosetsu juntei darani kyō*), contains a long list of magical rites that strongly resembles those quoted from the *Beppongi* in the Nyoirin chapter of the *Kakuzen shō*.[89] Topics covered in this Zhunti sutra include not only rituals for curing various illnesses and attaining

[89] *T.* 20, 1076, translated by Amoghavajra (705-774). Cf. *T.* 20, 1075, and *T.* 20, 1077.

wisdom, among other benefits, but also rites for love and fertility. For example, we find these two procedures given together:

> And if there is a woman without children: Write the mantra with ox bezoar on birch bark, write the mantra [on it] and [have her] wear it as a belt. Before long she will have children.[90]
>
> And if there is a woman whose husband does not respect her: Take a new pitcher and fill it with water. Into the pitcher place the seven precious substances,[91] many efficacious medicines, the five types of grain, and white mustard seeds. Attach [a piece of] fine silk fabric to the neck of the pitcher. Recite the mantra [over it] 108 times. Have the woman form the basic [Zhunti] *mūdra* on the crown of her head. Take the water and pour it over her head. Immediately [she will] attain his ardent love. Not only [will she gain his] respect, but [she will] have male offspring. [They] will be firm in her womb.[92]

The use of white mustard seeds and recitation of the *dhāraṇī* 108 times in this ritual to gain a husband's ardent love stands out in this passage, as it is echoed in the *Kakuzen shō* passage we looked at earlier in which the devotee is directed to recite Nyoirin's *dhāraṇī* over white mustard seeds to gain the ardent love of a woman. (Apparently the procedure for gaining the love of a man is a little more complex.) That is not to say that other Chinese translations of esoteric Guanyin sutras from the Tang dynasty do not

[90] *T.* 20, 1076, 180a11-12.
[91] For those who might wish to try the recipe, Buddhist sutras give various lists of the seven jewels or precious substances (Sk. *sapta-ratna*) but one standard list includes gold, silver, beryl, crystal, mother-of-pearl, coral, and agate.
[92] *T.* 20, 1076, 180a13-17.

contain similar formulae for solving problems, even for achieving safe childbirth and fertility. What is intriguing here is the possibility that it may be through Nyoirin's proximity to Juntei and her rituals that Nyoirin found her way into a new role as child-giving goddess in Japan.

Though these rites take a slightly different form than those we saw in the Nyoirin chapter of the *Kakuzen shō*, their main themes are the same. This list far more closely resembles those Kakuzen quotes from the *Beppongi* than anything in the Chinese sutras concerning Ruyilun, which never explicitly mention love or fertility as benefits to be attained. Another curious element of this list from the Zhunti sutra is that in many of the rites it describes, the deity is invited to take possession of the body of a young boy or temple acolyte (J. *dōji* 童子). This theme of possession too is played out in Japan, on the occasion of Seiryō Gongen's visit to the monk Shōkaku 勝覺 (1058-1129) in 1088.

Shōkaku's possession

Shōbō's vision of Seiryō Gongen recorded in the *Daigoji engi* was dramatically recapitulated some 200 years later, and her role as an emanation of Nyoirin and Juntei Kannon was reaffirmed, when the goddess appeared again on the mountain in 1088, this time by taking possession of Shōkaku, then abbot of Daigoji and the son of Minamoto no Toshifusa 源俊房 (1035-1121), Minister of the Left, and a fourth-generation descendant of the sovereign Daigo, Shōbō's great patron who built many of the temple's

earliest structures.[93] Shōkaku is famous for having built the Sanbōin 三寶院 of Daigoji in 1115 at the behest of the sovereign Toba 鳥羽 (1103-1156, r. 1107-1123), which became an imperial temple (J. *monzeki* 門跡) and later the headquarters of the Tōzan branch of Shugendō.

The earliest account of Seiryō Gongen's visit appears in a brief section in the late twelfth-century *Daigo zōjiki*, dated the fourth month of Kanji 寛治 3 (1089), which recounts how Seiryō Gongen appears to Shōkaku in the form of a beautiful woman holding a wish-fulfilling jewel:

> While [Shōkaku] was meditating, Seiryō caused herself to manifest in his dream, and said: I should dwell in this place. Her true body was like that of Kichijōten, holding up a wish-fulfilling jewel in the left hand.[94]

Since our last encounter with her in the *Daigoji engi,* the dragon princess and two-headed snake seems to have evolved (or regressed) into a beautiful anthropomorphic goddess form. Kichijōten is a Hindu deity, the wife of the god Vishnu, who later became a goddess of luck and beauty in Japan.[95] Kichijōten holds a wish-fulfilling jewel and wears a wheel of dharma in her tiara, both attributes that may have linked her to Nyoirin.

---

[93] See *Daigo zōjiki*, 40-41 and *Daigoji shinyōroku*, vol. 1, 88-97.
[94] *Daigo zōjiki*, 40-41.
[95] Frédéric, *Buddhism*, 228. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Kichijōten was largely replaced by Benzaiten, another deity identified with Nyoirin Kannon, particularly in Tendai esotericism.

A more extensive chronicle of this event appears in the *Daigoji shinyōroku*.[96] Though this particular document in the collection is not dated, it gives the date of the incident as the eleventh month of Kanji 2 (1088). According to the text, Seiryō Gongen delivers a revelation to Shōkaku and his father, Minamoto Toshifusa. Shōkaku has just emerged after a period of seclusion on the anniversary of his master's death. The goddess first appears to Shōkaku in a dream or vision while he is meditating, but soon thereafter she takes possession of his body. Through Shōkaku, the deity first recounts many things she could not have known about his fellow monks in the temple, which frightens and mystifies them. Then Toshifusa arrives, and Shōkaku immediately begins to speak as Seiryō Gongen. The goddess delivers a revelation to Toshifusa in which she reaffirms the need for the Minamoto clan to be loyal to the temple that Daigo has established for them, and then asks that a shrine be built for her there.

In this account we can also read in Seiryō Gongen's revelation a message of support for the direct rule of the sovereign, which is intriguing since she, like Nyoirin-as-*gyokujo*, represents a female figure who invests the sovereign with power and legitimacy. Seiryō Gongen here exhorts the Minamoto to be loyal to Daigo, who built Daigoji and who is of course one of the few sovereigns in Heian Japan to have ruled with at least the ideal of the central power of divine mandate of the sovereign, the Chinese system upon which the Japanese institution was modeled. Daigo is known for having wielded real power rather than having his authority channeled through powerful regents, and his appointment of Sugawara no Michizane as Minister of the Right dealt a

---

[96] *Daigoji shinyōroku*, vol. 1, 94-97. For a discussion of this episode see also Akamatsu Toshihide 赤松俊秀, "Kami Daigo no Kiyotaki-myōjin shinzo" 上醍醐の清瀧明神像, *Bijutsu shi* 美術史 I, no. 3 (March 1951): 3-12.

blow to the long-held power of the Fujiwara regents.[97] The Minamoto clan itself was descended from the imperial family from the time of the sovereign Saga (786-842, r. 809-823). Like the two previous abbots of Daigoji, Shōkaku was directly descended from Daigo, so he was a natural choice to serve as a mouthpiece for the deity to communicate her message of Minamoto loyalty to Daigo.

Seiryō Gongen's exhortation held a further significance in light of the rivalry that existed by then between Daigoji and the great Nara temple of Tōdaiji. In 904 Shōbō had founded the Tōnan'in 東南院 at Tōdaiji, a major subtemple where monks studied both Sanron and Shingon doctrine; Tōnan'in went on to produce highly accomplished monks whom the court chose to serve as abbots of both Tōji and Daigoji. Tōdaiji then used this rationale to claim that Tōji should henceforth be considered a branch temple (J. *betsuin*) of Tōdaiji, and Daigoji a subordinate temple (J. *matsuji* 末寺).[98] To deflect this parry, in 1018 it was decreed that only monks from Shōbō's lineage who had actually trained at Daigoji could serve as its abbot, and from that time onward, Daigoji's abbots were always chosen from descendants of Daigo.[99] Thus part of what Seiryō Gongen appears to be doing here is defending her "territory"—that is, Daigoji's independence.

The phenomenon of the *gongen* taking possession of a monk looks distinctly un-Buddhist, more like the manifestation of a local cult clothed in Buddhist garb. Indeed, by this time believers had long worshipped the rock on which Nyoirin was said to have appeared to Shōbō, believing that she dwelled within it; in fact, they continued

---

[97] Shively and McCullough, *Heian Japan*, 56.
[98] Ibid., 501-2.
[99] Ibid.

to worship the rock long after the shrine devoted to Seiryō Gongen had been installed in the same spot, a detail that further suggests Seiryō was no mere Buddhist fabrication, but represented the preexisting cult of a local mountain deity.[100] Her appearance to Shōkaku in the form of Kichijōten holding a jewel invests her with yet another layer of borrowed identity.

The following year, Shōkaku is said to have constructed a shrine dedicated to Seiryō Gongen, installed her as the tutelary deity of Daigoji, and placed a small statue of Nyoirin Kannon, along with a statue of Juntei Kannon that apparently has not survived, within the shrine as the *shintai* 神体, the physical object of worship in which the *kami* takes up residence.[101] That Nyoirin statue appears to have remained hidden away in darkness, and did not come to light again until almost a thousand years later, on the occasion of a great fire at the temple in 1939, when it was discovered by the scholar Akamatsu Toshihide 赤松俊秀.[102]

In both of these instances—first with Shōbō in the ninth century, and then with Shōkaku in the eleventh—Seiryō Gongen appears in female form, and is recognized as an avatar of the two Kannon. It is significant that in both cases Nyoirin and Juntei are said to have appeared as Seiryō Gongen, not merely according to some secret transmission written down in a text, but in a tangible form that was allegedly experienced and recorded by the goddess's devotees.

[100] See Akamatsu, "Kami Daigo no Kiyotaki-myōjin shinzo," 24.
[101] Ibid., 9-12. For a more recent art historical study of this statue, see Tsuda Tetsuei 津田徹英, "Kaisetsu: Daigoji Reihōkan no Nyoirin Kannon zō" 解説：醍醐寺霊宝館の如意輪観音像, *Daigo Shunju* 醍醐春秋 38 (2001): 16-32.
[102] Akamatsu, "Kami Daigo no Kiyotaki-myōjin shinzo," 1-3.

One question implicit in both of these accounts is why Shōbō and Shōkaku commemorated their visions of the local avatar Seiryō Gongen (and her various manifestations as a dragon princess and Kichijōten) with images of her original form of the two Kannon, a rather abstract dimension of what they had experienced. That is, why were there visions of Seiryō Gongen, yet images made of Nyoirin and Juntei? Like Saigo, Akamatsu, in his study of the Nyoirin-*shintai* icon he discovered, obliquely suggests that the vitality of the local tradition superseded that of orthodox Buddhism.[103] The real "original substance" of the deity might not have been Nyoirin Kannon at all, but something closer to Seiryō Gongen. This is supported by the passage on "Mystery" in the *Shinyōroku*, which explicitly affirms that the deity's true form is the one body of the *kami*, not the two "buddhas." At Daigoji, and in many temples in which Nyoirin is enshrined today as the main object of worship, the bodhisattva is a *hibutsu* 秘佛 (hidden Buddha), kept in darkness and brought out to be viewed and revered perhaps only once each year, decade, or century. In light of Akamatsu's observation, it is possible to imagine that in some cases Nyoirin's image is hidden in darkness as a *hibutsu* precisely because without that means of supercharging the figure with spiritual power, it might have remained a lifeless mask.

In the midst of the competition among esoteric sects and lineages for patronage in late Heian Japan, it was probably also important for Daigoji to maintain a legitimate Buddhist character, in alignment with the formal system of ritual practices that Kūkai had established upon his return from China. Shōbō the forest ascetic later came to be considered a Shugendō patriarch, and Daigoji has always had strong ties to Shugendō

---

[103] Akamatsu, "Kami Daigo no Kiyotaki-myōjin shinzo," 25.

practice, which likely introduced competing strands of local religion. Enshrining Nyoirin and Juntei Kannon as the main objects of worship there may thus have served as a sign of Buddhist orthodoxy. Beginning from the time of Daigo, the imperial family cultivated a deep relationship with Daigoji, a Shingon temple that provided the powerful technology of esoteric ritual, with its wish-fulfilling jewels (whether real or metaphoric) that could make rain fall and male heirs be born at the right times; and the temple needed support that could only be gained through casting itself in the role of official protector and legitimizer of imperial rule.

Long before the appearance of the *Kakuzen shō*, then, a tradition had developed in the Ono branch of Shingon in which Nyoirin merged with female deities, not only Seiryō Gongen, the goddess of Mt. Kasatori, but also with her female "twin" Kannon, Juntei.

Shōbō's legacy: Visions of Nyoirin at Ishiyamadera

Until now in this study I have focused on the evidence for Nyoirin Kannon's convergence with two female deities in the tradition of the Ono branch of Shingon. The tenth-century *Daigoji engi* has turned out to be an invaluable source for making sense of Nyoirin's changing identity, as Shōbō was perhaps the figure most crucial to the early development of Nyoirin faith in Japan. Now I would like to trace Shōbō's influence slightly further afield, to Ishiyamadera, a temple that gained fame during the Heian period as a pilgrimage site frequented by sovereigns and aristocrats, who went there to pray to its main deity Nyoirin for children, safe childbirth, and conjugal happiness, as

well as other worldly benefits. An examination of the founding legend of Ishiyamadera—and Shōbō's influence reflected there—will shed further light on Nyoirin's wish-granting powers, "feminization," and later appeal to female devotees in Japan.

Founded in the mid-eighth century, Ishiyamadera is one of the oldest temples in Japan devoted to the worship of Kannon. The temple is built on a hill overlooking Lake Biwa, in what was then the province of Ōmi 近江, now Shiga 滋賀 prefecture, east of Kyoto; its name is said to come from the many curious rock formations that are found there. Many tales of devotees' supernatural dreams and visions of Nyoirin are recorded in the temple's illustrated miraculous history, the *Ishiyamadera engi emaki* 石山寺縁起絵巻, whose text was compiled from 1324 to 1326, and reflects a tradition of wondrous encounters with Nyoirin that had developed at the temple during the Heian period.[104]

Shōbō himself had a deep connection to Ishiyamadera that influenced the *Engi*'s famous tale of the temple's founding. According to some scholars he actually served as abbot of Ishiyamadera, as his disciple Shunnyū did, though this "fact" is passed over in his official biographies.[105] Geographically he lived much of his life in the area surrounding Ishiyamadera, east of Kyoto: he not only founded Daigoji but also served, among other positions, as *inshu* 院主 (abbot) of the subtemple Tōnan'in that he founded at Tōdaiji (which he founded), as well as both *chōsha* 長者 (head) and *bettō* 別当 (superintendent) of Tōji in Kyoto. He lived and practiced in temples within a

---

[104] For a study of aristocratic women's pilgrimages to Ishiyamadera and other sites, see Barbara Ambros, "Liminal Journeys: Pilgrimages of Noblewomen in Mid-Heian Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, nos. 3–4 (1997): 301-45.

[105] See, for example, Naitō Sakae 内藤榮, "Ishiyamadera no kōgei" 石山寺の工芸, in *Kannon no Mitera—Ishiyamadera* 観音のみてら—石山寺, ed. Washizuka Hiromitsu 鷲塚泰光 (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2002), 15.

region that stretched from Yamashina 山科, the area southeast of Kyoto that served as a main route connecting Kyoto to the shore of Lake Biwa, all the way to Nara, so it is natural that this region became the cradle of Nyoirin faith. Today not only Daigoji and Ishiyamadera but also other historic temples in this area, including the imperial Shingon temples of Kanjuji and Zuishin'in, still enshrine important sculptures of Nyoirin.

In fact, Japanese scholars hold that the location of Mt. Kasatori, in Uji, where Shōbō founded Daigoji, lay on a central traffic route that Shōbō frequently used. When he was studying at Tōdaiji in Yamato 大和 (now Nara prefecture), he often traveled through the mountains to Ishiyamadera in Ōmi, which was another important Buddhist training temple at that time, and Mt. Kasatori lies en route between the two. The north-south path that crosses the mountain's western base was also a main traffic route connecting Kyoto and Nara, while the path along its ridge was probably used by mountain ascetics.[106]

As it happens, not only Shōbō but even occasionally Nyoirin herself was alleged to make use of these mountain travel routes. For example, in the *Daigo zōjiki* the Ishiyamadera Nyoirin declares that she frequently visits the Nyoirin Hall in the upper part of Daigoji, which inspires Ishiyamadera to make substantial annual offerings of rice to Daigoji.[107] And according to the *Daigoji engi*, the Nyoirin Kannon at Iwamotodera 岩本寺 in Ōmi often vanishes and then returns to her place at the temple. People find this suspicious, until Nyoirin appears in a dream to more than ten elders on the same night, in which she explains:

---

[106] Saeki, *Shōbō*, 86-87.
[107] *Daigo zōjiki*, 11.

> In order to serve my own manifested body, Juntei, mother of Buddhas, I always go to visit Mt. Daigo, and tonight also I will go to pay respects at Mt. Daigo and will not be back for some time. You should not be suspicious. Furthermore, do not cause people to worry. Also, make offerings to me, and every day [these] buddha offerings should be sent to Mt. Daigo to be offered to Juntei, Mother of Buddhas.[108]

As a result, in an outpouring of faith the people of the Iwamato manor, or *shōen* 荘園, make offerings to Daigoji. This passage is interesting not only because it underscores the ongoing identification of Nyoirin with Juntei, but also because in both cases Nyoirin's wanderings seem to have borne fruit for Daigoji in that they inspired devotion—expressed in the form of donations—from the temples she visited.

This theme of wandering and displacement can also be seen in the *Daigoji engi* tale we looked at earlier, in which Nyoirin slips out of the hall that Shōbō has built for the two Kannon and takes her place instead on a rock, and in Seiryō Gongen's account of how she moves to a less exposed site on the mountain on the advice of the earth god. Such activities hint at the local nature of this deity, her visceral presence as a goddess who knows the terrain. Nyoirin's will to escape the hall that has been built for her also resonates with Seiryō Gongen's tale of having fled her temple in Changan in order to follow Kūkai's ship to Japan. All these events reflect a strong attachment to the mountain itself, which supports the notion that Nyoirin may have served above all as a mouthpiece for one or more local gods.

---

108 *DNBZ* 117, 247a. Cited in Saeki, *Shōbō*, 207-8.

This process of mythological accretion continues today. While Nyoirin is still enshrined as the main deity at Ishiyamadera, the temple has now become—largely for commercial reasons, no doubt—a sort of shrine to Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (late 10th-early 11th centuries), author of *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語. On the temple grounds stands a sleek modern sculpture of Murasaki, and in the main hall the gift shop sells Murasaki souvenir amulets and notebooks. Priests at the temple will gladly point out the room where Murasaki is said to have stayed when she began writing *Genji*, even the very landscape she looked out upon when the idea for the book's plot occurred to her. According to an old legend about Murasaki that appears in the *Ishiyamadera engi*, which has been documented at least since the late Heian period, she herself is an avatar of Nyoirin Kannon.[109] No one really knows if Murasaki ever visited or stayed at Ishiyamadera, though it is possible given that many court nobles did visit or go on retreat there in her time.[110]

Hayami Tasuku has argued that the Heian period saw a shift of emphasis from rituals for state protection that had characterized the Nara period to a growing interest in

---

[109] Nakashima Hiroshi 中島博, "Ishiyamadera no kaiga" 石山寺の絵画, in *Kannon no Mitera—Ishiyamadera* 観音のみてら—石山寺, ed. Washizuka Hiromitsu 鷲塚泰光 (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2002), 14.

[110] Ishiyamadera is not mentioned in Murasaki Shikibu's famous diary, but other contemporary diaries of the time do make reference to it. In Fujiwara no Sanesuke's *Shōyūki*, for example, according to an entry dated the eleventh day of the ninth month of Kankō 寛弘 5 (1008), on the occasion of the birth of Prince Atsuhira 敦成 (an event also described in detail by Murasaki in her diary), Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966-1027) arranged for generous gifts to be made to several shrines and temples in gratitude for the birth of his grandson, among which Ishiyamadera is the only temple mentioned by name. The entry concludes: "Saddles were presented to the temple at Ishiyama for sutra reading, and the same thing was done for many other sacred places. Everyone was greatly pleased." See Richard Bowring's English translation of a section of the *Shōyūki*, in Murasaki Shikibu, *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, trans. Richard Bowring (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 87. In an earlier instance, after Sanesuke had sent his daughter several times to the Kannon of Kiyomizudera 清水寺 to cure her of an illness, upon her death he sponsored the construction of a Nyoirin Kannon image as well as Nyoirin rites at Ishiyamadera and Jūichimen Kannon rites at Hasedera 長谷寺. See *Shōyūki* entries for Eien 永延 1.1.20 (987) and Shōryaku 正暦 1.8.20-24, 9.5 (990). Cited in Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine," 6.

rituals for personal protection and benefit, due to an increasing sense of social instability as the power of the aristocracy was threatened.[111] Whatever the causes of this shift, Ishiyamadera was a major site at which such rites for achieving individual aims took place. For the aristocracy as well as the monks it patronized, Nyoirin—like many esoteric deities—was a granter of personal wishes. Even the need to recite her *dhāraṇī*, expounded in the Chinese texts and reflected in Kakuzen's text, here seems to have given way to the cult of a place: devotees had only to visit the temple and pray devoutly in order to receive Nyoirin's benefits. The *Engi* tales suggest that the task of reciting the *dhāraṇī* was often left to the religious professionals.

It is not clear exactly when the Ishiyamadera Nyoirin, however, "became" Nyoirin. Although temple lore has it that the Nyoirin statue originally enshrined there was one of the earliest representations of the deity in Japan, dating to the Nara period, art historians have suggested that the image did not come to be seen as Nyoirin until the Heian period. I would further suggest that Shōbō was likely the person responsible for bringing Nyoirin to Ishiyamadera, rather than the other way around.

To determine whether this is the case, we will examine the famous legend of the founding of Ishiyamadera that appears in the tenth-century collection of tales *Sanbō ekotoba*. This tale, and the elements of which it is composed, will help explain how Nyoirin faith took root at Ishiyamadera, and how her child-granting status there probably has much to do with her "feminine" identity in the Ono branch of Shingon that we have already demonstrated. I want to suggest that the "story" of Ishiyamadera—in other words, the legends that surround it and continue today to define its significance—

[111] This is one of the main arguments of Hayami's often-quoted work, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*.

was illuminated by a key moment in the ninth century that might be called the beginning of its "esotericization," when the temple came under the authority of Shingon Buddhism.

To test this hypothesis, and to better understand the temple's "esotericization," we will first examine references to Ishiyamadera in the *Kakuzen shō* and other late Heian and Kamakura ritual-iconographic manuals, which reveal the extent to which the image of the two-armed Nyoirin had become linked to this temple by that time. Then we will compare two versions of the miraculous tale of the founding of Ishiyamadera, which appear in the *Ishiyamadera engi* and *Sanbō ekotoba,* and consider them in light of events recounted in the *Daigoji engi*. Read side by side, these texts make clear that it was Shōbō's influence—whether through his own work or that of his disciples—that brought Nyoirin's wish-granting powers to to the temple.

The "original" Nyoirin and the great fire of 1078

The popular association of the two-armed Nyoirin with Ishiyamadera is evident in a passage in the *Kakuzen shō* that is also echoed almost verbatim in several other ritual-iconographic compendia, including the *Besson zakki* and *Asabashō*, among others.[112]

These three texts quote almost exactly the same information on the two-armed form of Nyoirin at Ishiyamadera, which their compilers attribute to various sources. In general these ritual-iconographic texts read like instruction manuals that explain how a deity is to be properly visualized, drawn, and worshipped, with historical references

[112] See *DNBZ* 47, 190b; *T.* Zuzō 3, 220c17-20; *T.* Zuzō 9, 3190, 196a13-16.

appearing only sporadically in their caches of lore. In this context, while the other forms of Nyoirin (the four-armed, six-armed, and so forth) are usually described without relation to a specific place or tradition, whenever the two-armed form of Nyoirin is mentioned the authors invariably note that it is the "Ishiyamadera image."[113]

The *Kakuzen shō* description of the two-armed Nyoirin quotes a text it refers to as the "Golden Wheel Spell-King Sutra," the *Jinlun zhouwang jing* 金輪呪王經 (J. *Kinrin jūō kyō*), in reference to an image of Nyoirin holding a three-branched lotus stalk in the left hand and a *cintāmaṇi* on the upturned right palm.[114] A parenthetical note that follows explains that the "Ishiyamadera Nyoirin" takes a slightly different form, which is not quoted from any text, but rather the image itself is "quoted":

> When Ishiyama [temple] burned to the ground, the image was seen and worshipped: the left hand is in wish-granting *mudrā* [J. *yogan'in* 与願印, palm open, facing up], resting on the knee, the foot hanging down. The right hand holds a three-branched lotus stalk. One branch is [a blossom that has] not yet opened, and one is now a lotus blossom, perhaps with a jewel [resting] upon it. This is no ordinary jewel.[115]

A few lines later, the text notes:

---

[113] Normally when we think of Nyoirin what comes to mind first is her six-armed esoteric form. The two-armed Nyoirin, however, has long been associated with the earlier Nara-period worship of the bodhisattva, partly because it is the form described in the core text devoted to Ruyilun and his spell, the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*; but this image is different from that associated with Ishiyamadera. See pp. 122-24 for a description of the *Tuoluoni jing* image.

[114] The 金輪呪王經 may refer to the *Ruyi baozhu zhuanlun bimi xianshen chengfo jinlun zhouwang jing* 如意寶珠轉輪祕密現身成佛金輪呪王經 (J. *Nyoi hōju tenrinn himitsu genshin jōbutsu kinrin juō kyō*), *T.* 19, 961, translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛. None of Nyoirin's iconographic variants that are attributed to this text appear in the current surviving version of it, however.

[115] *DNBZ* 47, 190b.

> The *Jikkanshō* 十巻抄 says[116]: From long ago the two-armed image was made. The right hand is in the *mudrā* of reassurance [J. *semui'in* 施無畏印, palm held upright, open, facing outward]. The left hand is on the knee, making the wish-granting *mudrā* [J. *yogan* 與願], the left foot hanging down, seated on a rock. The 4.8-meter [J. *jōroku* 丈六] Nyoirin images at Ishiyama, and at Ryūgaiji 龍蓋寺 in the country of Yamato, are the same.[117] Also, the Nyoirin on the left side of the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji is the same. The left foot hangs down.[118]

According to these passages, one two-armed form of Nyoirin was seen after a great fire at Ishiyamadera, and then later a slightly different form took its place (with the right hand in the *mudrā* of reassurance replacing the right hand holding a three-branched lotus blossom); and this latter form was enshrined not only at Ishiyamadera, but also at Ryūgaiji and Tōdaiji.

The mention here of the "great fire" amidst a long series of textual citations on the various forms of Nyoirin itself represents a kind of esoteric transmission through the "sighting" of the main deity. The image seen at the moment of the great fire is not sketched but described only verbally, almost as though Kakuzen (and compilers of the other texts in which this passage appears) felt compelled to include this report as a kind of visual revelation, a secret transmission outside the texts. The deity may already have

---

[116] *T.* Zuzō 3, 28c14-18. A ritual-iconographic compendium attributed to the Shingon monk Keijū 恵什 (ca. 1135).

[117] Ryūgaiji, also known as Okadera 岡寺, is located in what was then Yamato province.

One *jō* 丈 is equivalent to about 3.03 meters or ten *shaku* 尺, and one Japanese *shaku* is equivalent to about 30.3 cm. The term *jōroku* 丈六 denotes an image of about 4.8 meters, a standard height for sculptures of Buddhist deities.

[118] *DNBZ* 47, 190b.

been a *hibutsu* by then, as it is now: today the main icon at Ishiyamadera is shown to the public only once every 33 years (the next viewing is scheduled for 2024).[119]

This account also links the Nyoirin Kannon of Ishiyamadera with two-armed Nyoirin sculptures at Tōdaiji and Ryūgaiji. As we will see, from the tenth century if not earlier, the founding legend of Ishiyamadera attributed its origin to a miraculous vision of Nyoirin on its site that made possible the completion of the great bronze Buddha at Tōdaiji in the eighth century. It is possible that the sculptures at all three temples came to be identified as Nyoirin around the same time.

A great fire does appear to have occurred at Ishiyamadera in 1078, which completely destroyed the temple's main hall.[120] A more elaborate version of this incident appears in the *Ishiyamadera engi*:

> On the second day of the second month of Jōryaku 承暦 2 [1078], there was a fire at this temple, and its central hall burned down, but the main deity flew out of the smoke and alighted on top of a willow tree on an island in the lake, where it shone with light. It is said that one of the monks placed it in his sleeve and brought it back. When we think of this [event] alongside the earlier example of the sacred mirror [J. *jinkyō* 神鏡] flying from the Venerable Place (J. Kashikodokoro 貴所)[121] at the time of the Tentoku [957-961] fire, even though it is [now] the last age, this is certainly an extraordinary incident.[122]

---

[119] For a complete listing of *hibutsu* housed in Japanese temples, several of which are Nyoirin images, see *Zenkoku jisha butsuzō gaido* 全国寺社仏像ガイド (Tokyo: Bijutsu shuppansha, 2001), 399-431.
[120] Iwata Shigeki 岩田茂樹, "Ishiyamadera no chōzō—honzon nippi jōroku kannon zō o chūshin ni" 石山寺の彫像—本尊二臂丈六観音像を中心に, in *Kannon no Mitera—Ishiyamadera* 観音のみてら—石山寺, ed. Washizuka Hiromitsu 鷲塚泰光 (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2002), 11.
[121] "Kashikodokoro" is the name of place in the imperial palace where the sacred mirror is kept.
[122] *DNBZ* 117, 190b. For a modern Japanese translation of the *Ishiyamadera engi* text, see Washio Ryūki 鷲尾隆輝, ed., *Ishiyamadera engi emaki* 石山寺縁起絵巻 (Ōtsu: Ishiyamadera, 1996), 60-74.

This later version of the fire incident, like the *Kakuzen shō* mention of it, describes a miraculous revelation at the moment of the great fire: the icon flies out of the smoke and alights in the top of a tree, where she beams with light. The incident with the mirror again links Nyoirin with *kami*, here the sun goddess Amaterasu, and the three regalia of the sovereign. This set of associations is further developed in the Tendai esoteric tradition, particularly the *Keiran shūyōshū*, which like this text dates to the fourteenth century, to which I will return later in this dissertation. Here again the Nyoirin icon is animated with the power to escape the confines of the hall in which she is enshrined; and here, as in the *Daigoji engi*, she exhibits a *kami*-like inclination to take up residence at high points (a tree on an island, a rocky outcropping) in the natural landscape.

The oldest known version of the founding legend of Ishiyamadera appears in the late tenth-century tale collection *Sanbō ekotoba*.[123] This famous story concerns the construction of Tōdaiji in 751, and portrays Ishiyamadera as the site of successful prayers to Nyoirin for gold needed to complete the Great Buddha hall at Tōdaiji. The sovereign Shōmu (701-756, r. 724-749) prays to Zaō Gongen, the god of Mt. Kimpu ("Golden Peak") for gold to complete construction of the temple.[124] Zaō instructs him to

---

[123] See Minamoto no Tamenori, *Sanbō ekotoba,* 314-19, and Kamens, *The Three Jewels*, 328-332.
[124] Also called Kimpusen or Kane no Mitake, located in what is now Nara prefecture. As the home of Zaō Gongen the mountain is considered to be one of the most sacred sites for Shugendō. Zaō is the central deity of Shugendō, a fierce god who dwells on the mountain and is believed to guard the gold hidden within it; Shugendō's founder En no Gyōja (fl. late seventh century) is said to have had a vision of Zaō on the mountain. Zaō is depicted with one head, three eyes, and two arms, right foot raised in a pose that suggests leaping or alighting, holding up a vajra in the right hand, and the left hand on his hip in the sword mudrā (J. *tokuen no in*). For a general overview of Shugendō practices and the worship of Zaō Gongen on Mt. Kimpu, see Shudō Zenju 首藤善樹, *Kimpusen* 金峰山 (Nara: Kimpusenji, 1985).

worship an image of Nyoirin, which leads to the prompt discovery of gold in faraway Mutsu 陸奥 province.

In spite of the seemingly ancient association between Nyoirin and Ishiyamadera, however, the main icon or *honzon* 本尊 at the temple, a late-Heian reconstruction of a Nara-period image (and probably also the similar icons at Tōdaiji and Ryūgaiji that the *Kakuzen shō* mentions), does not appear to have been originally created as an image of Nyoirin. Art historians had long believed the Nara image to have been Nyoirin, but in recent years Inoue Kazutoshi and other scholars have concluded that this icon was more likely to have been made as a generic "Kannon" image.[125] One key piece of evidence for the doubt cast on the image is a document in the *Shōsōin monjo* 正倉院文書 collection that records the founding of Ishiyamadera and consecration of the image, but refers to it only as "Kannon."[126] Since Nyoirin was known in Japan by the mid-Nara period, it is likely that if the image was originally conceived as Nyoirin, it would have been identified in this document as such. Furthermore, contemporary Nara-period documents such as the *Saidaiji shizaichō* 西大寺資材帳, while mentioning the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, do not list two-armed images of Nyoirin among their collections.[127] A third factor that casts doubt on the veracity of Nyoirin's early presence at Ishiyamadera is that two-armed sculptures of Nyoirin said to be based on Nara-period images have an

[125] See Inoue, "Nyoirin Kannonzō," 26-28. Though the original Tōdaiji image is lost, with the current reconstruction dating to the Edo period (1600-1867), the sculpture at Okadera is noteworthy because the head and a part of the torso are from the original clay sculpture from the Nara period. Saidaiji 西大寺 also has a two-armed Nyoirin, which according to Inoue probably dates to the twelfth century.
[126] Inoue, "Nyoirin Kannonzō," 26. Shōsōin is the famous wooden treasury at Tōdaiji in Nara, and its document collection from the Nara period is one of the oldest in Japan. For more on Nyoirin worshipped in healing rites during the Nara period see Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, 5-6.
[127] Ibid., 26. The *Saidaiji shizaichō* is a catalogue of of objects imported from Tang China, dated 780. Saidaiji is the head temple of the Shingon Ritsu 眞言律 sect of Japanese Buddhism, located in Nara and founded by Empress Shōtoku in 764.

iconographic form quite different from the Tang-dynasty two-armed form of Nyoirin found in China.[128] Whatever the case, the earliest confirmed evidence we have for this identification is the tenth-century *Sanbō ekotoba* tale, to which we will return shortly.

The past: converging legends

In their studies of Ishiyamadera, the Japanese scholars Kajitani Ryōji 梶谷亮治 and Iwata Shigeki 岩田茂樹 have suggested that the "esotericization" of Ishiyamadera, and the definite identification of its *honzon* as Nyoirin Kannon, began not in the Nara period, but with Shōbō's activities at the temple.[129] As I mentioned earlier, Shōbō was known for his superhuman powers of strength and his abilities in the realm of rainmaking, exorcism, and other magical feats; according to the tenth-century *Daigoji engi*, he discovered what he considered to be a holy site at the top of Mt. Kasatori, southeast of Kyoto, where he founded Daigoji, the temple from which the Ono lineage emerged. Though he does not appear to officially have served as its abbot, Shōbō spent time at Ishiyamadera and there passed on the Ono lineage of esoteric transmission to his disciple Kangen, who then transmitted it to Shunnyū; and both of these monks did serve as abbots of the temple.[130] Shōbō's devotion to Nyoirin was so great that by the late twelfth century he himself was believed to be a manifestation of the bodhisattva.[131]

[128] Ibid., 24 and 26.
[129] See Kajitani Ryōji 梶谷亮治, "Ishiyamadera no rekishi to bijutsu" 石山寺の歴史と美術 and Iwata Shigeki, "Ishiyamadera no chōzō," in *Kannon no Mitera—Ishiyamadera* 観音のみてら—石山寺, ed. Washizuka Hiromitsu 鷲塚泰光 (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2002).
[130] Kajitani, "Ishiyamadera no rekishi to bijutsu," 8.
[131] Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, 123.

We have already seen how Daigoji was founded on a mountain that lay on the road between Tōdaiji and Ishiyamadera, two temples between which Shōbō probably often traveled. According to one legend, he was known for the miraculous speed with which he ran between the temples he frequented: it was said that in a single day he could travel from Daigoji to the Zaō hall at Yoshino (in what is now Nara prefecture) to Tōdaiji, and back to Daigoji.[132] As I mentioned earlier, Shōbō also engaged in ascetic practices on Mt. Kimpu, in what is now Nara prefecture, and enshrined images there of Nyoirin, Tahō Tennō 多寶天王 (Prabhutaratna), and Zaō Gongen.[133] These stories highlight the geographical proximity of these temples to each other, as well as the interpenetration of these various circles in which Shōbō moved—the mountain asceticism of Mt. Kimpu, the Ono branch of Shingon he brought to Daigoji, the older Buddhist philosophical traditions at Tōdaiji, and the nascent Shingon Buddhist practice that was taking root at Ishiyamadera.

It turns out that Shōbō's influence at Ishiyamadera may have extended well beyond mere "esotericization." The evidence for this assertion lies in a comparison of the two versions of the basic founding legend of Ishiyamadera—which appear in the tenth-century *Sanbō ekotoba* and the fourteenth-century *Ishiyamadera engi emaki*—with the founding legend of Daigoji recounted in the *Daigoji engi*. *Sanbō ekotoba,* completed in 984, is an illustrated collection of Buddhist tales compiled for didactic purposes by Minamoto no Tamenori (d. 1011) for an imperial princess who had recently become a nun, Sonshi Naishinnō 尊子内親王 (966-985), daughter of the sovereign

---

[132] Saeki, *Shōbō*, 58.
[133] *Daigoji engi*, 249b.

Reizei 冷泉 (950-1011, r. 967-969). This text contains the earliest extant version of the founding legend of Ishiyamadera, and like many of these tales it may well have been in circulation long before it was committed to writing in the tenth century. In this tale, the construction of Tōdaiji is complete except for the gold leaf needed to adorn the great bronze Buddha, as well as the halls and pagoda. The sovereign Shōmu prays to Zaō Gongen, the deity of Mt. Kimpu, asking if he will let them have some of the gold in the mountain for the completion of the cherished project. Zaō responds with a revelation:

> "The gold in this mountain is to be saved for the future world of Maitreya. I am only its guardian; I cannot give you any. On the banks of the river in Shiga District in Ōmi Province lies a stone fished out by an old man many years ago. Make an image of the Wish-Granting Kannon, place it on this rock, and worship it." The stone was soon found, at what is now the Ishiyama Temple. The image of Kannon was made, and prayers were addressed to it, whereupon the emperor received word that gold had been discovered in Mutsu province. The era name was immediately changed to "Tenpyō Shōhō" 天平勝寳 [Excellent Treasure].[134]

The temple Ishiyamadera is founded on the site where Nyoirin is worshipped. Further highlighting the close association between Tōdaiji and Ishiyamadera, the next paragraph in the story states that the monk Rōben 良辨 (689-773)—Kegon patriarch, alleged founder of Ishiyamadera, Shōmu's preceptor, a leading participant in the construction of

[134] Translation from Kamens, *The Three Jewels*, 328. See also Minamoto no Tamenori, *Sanbō ekotoba*, 314. Mutsu province spanned most of the northeast coast of the main island of Japan at that time. The actual dates of the Tempyō Kanpō 天平感寶 era are 749.4.14 to 749.7.2. In the fourth month of 749 the provincial governor sent gold to the capital, at which point the name Kanpō ("received") was added to the name of the era, Tenpyō, and later the same year the name was changed again to Tempyō Shōhō. Kamens, 331 n. 9.

Tōdaiji and its first *bettō*—is present for the dedication ceremony for the temple, which takes place in 752.[135]

A longer and more elaborate version of this story appears in the *Ishiyamadera engi*, which is probably not surprising since over nearly 350 years it had ample time to acquire new nuances, details, and elaborations. The text of the *Ishiyamadera engi emaki* was compiled in 1324-26.[136] The *Engi* text opens with the same founding legend, according to which the temple was founded by Rōben, in accordance with the prayer of Shōmu, with its main deity as a two-armed, six-*sun* 寸 (18-centimeter) statue of Nyoirin that had belonged to Prince Shōtoku. A 4.8-meter (J. *jōroku)* sculpture of Nyoirin was made, and the small statue was placed inside its body.[137]

In this *Engi* version of the tale much is the same, except that instead of offering the prayers himself Shōmu asks Rōben to go to Mt. Kimpu pray to Zaō for help to find gold for Tōdaiji.[138] Zaō then gives Rōben instructions in a dream to go to a mountain near Lake Biwa and pray. There he encounters an old man sitting on a big rock, fishing. The monk asks him who he is, and whether this is a spiritual place, and the old man answers that it is, and that on top of the mountain is a large rock in the shape of an eight-petalled lotus, with purple clouds always hanging over the site, which also shines

[135] Kamens, *The Three Jewels*, 331 n. 10.

[136] All of the text dates to this period, while the images are from progressively later periods; but the paintings of scrolls 1, 2, 3, and 5 are believed to date from time of original text. See Washio, ed., *Ishiyamadera engi emaki*, 1-5.

[137] *DNBZ* 117, 179a. Nyoirin's connection here to the legendary sixth-seventh century Buddhist patron Shōtoku Taishi, or Prince Shōtoku, is no accident; legends abound about Shōtoku's devotion to Nyoirin, and Shinran's dream discussed earlier in this paper took place in the Rokkakudō, the Kyoto temple said to be founded by Shōtoku. Today Nyoirin is still its main object of worship, in the form of a small *hibutsu* or secret icon that Shōtoku is said to have worn around his neck. We will return to Shōtoku's connection to Nyoirin later in this dissertation.

One *sun* is equal to about 3.03 centimeters, so an image that is six *sun* in height is about 18 centimeters.

[138] The *Ishiyamadera engi* account of this tale appears in *DNBZ* 117, 179a-181b.

with an auspicious light. He describes it as the place where Kannon's benefits are manifested. At last he identifies himself as the earth god of the mountain, Hira no Myōjin 比良の明神, and then he disappears. The text also mentions that this mountain is a manifestation of Potalaka, Kannon's mythological paradise and homeland.

Rōben reports back to Shōmu, and later brings a statue of Nyoirin to the site, builds a grass hut on the mountain, places the figure on top of the eight-petalled-lotus rock, and practices esoteric rites before it. Gold dust is then discovered in Mutsu province, proving the veracity of Zaō Gongen's revelation, and the era name is changed to Tempyō Kanpō. After that, Rōben attempts to remove the Nyoirin icon from the large rock in order to enshrine it in another place, but the image mysteriously sticks to the rock; and so the sovereign instructs him to build the temple on that site.

Obviously, the *Sanbō ekotoba* and *Engi* versions of this tale share many elements in common; in the *Engi* version, however, the history of the place itself is infused with blessed and mysterious qualities. Near the end of the *Engi* tale, for example, an ancient bronze bell is discovered on the site, a highly auspicious find, and a sign that this was once the site of a much older temple.[139] The text thus unfolds various historical layers, with the discovery of this third-century B.C.E. artifact in the eighth century, recorded in our fourteenth-century text. Adding a further layer of prestige and authority, the text reminds us that Ishiyamadera was constructed earlier than the venerable Tōdaiji as an "imperial vow temple" (J. *chokuganji* 勅願時) for the protection of the sovereign and nation, at which members of the imperial family have long come to

139 Ibid., 181b.

worship.[140] Though the gold for Tōdaiji is discovered faraway in Mutsu province, other *Engi* tales suggest that this dis-located miracle inspired an extremely local cult of miracles on the site.

With these developments in mind, we now return to the *Daigoji engi*, with its legend of Shōbō's founding of Daigoji on Mt. Kasatori, the oldest extant text of which dates to 937—that is, 37 years after Shōbō's death but 47 years before the compilation date of the *Sanbō ekotoba*, which contains the earliest of the two tales I just mentioned. Thus, the *Daigoji engi* might well have influenced that tenth-century account of the founding of Ishiyamadera, and it could certainly have influenced the much later *Engi* account.

As we saw earlier, in the *Daigoji engi*, Shōbō climbs Mt. Kasatori after witnessing a miraculous five-colored cloud hovering over its peak, and there he encounters an old man drinking from a stream, who turns out to be the earth god protecting the place, Yoko'o Daimyojin, a layman who has been practicing on the site for many years and wants to protect the Buddha dharma. Shōbō makes and enshrines images of Nyoirin and Juntei Kannon. Juntei then goes in and takes her place in the hall, while Nyoirin slips out and takes her place on a rock on the eastern peak of the mountain, where Shōbō later builds her a new hall of her own.

We can now see several uncanny similarities between the founding legend of Daigoji and that of Ishiyamadera, in its two versions. In both temples' legends, the priest (Shōbō in the case of Daigoji, Rōben in that of Ishiyamadera) goes to the mountain and encounters an old man there who turns out to be the earth god—in the

---

[140] Ibid.

case of Daigoji he is drinking from a stream, and in the case of Ishiyamadera he is fishing. The mountain is shown to be an auspicious and holy place, wreathed in colored clouds, where Buddhas of the past dwelled. In each case the old man confirms that it is a blessed place, and a miraculous encounter with Nyoirin Kannon later occurs. The physical willfulness of the Nyoirin icon is another common theme: in the *Daigoji engi* Shōbō places the image in the hall, then discovers it has gone outside to sit on a rocky cliff, where he subsequently builds a hall for it, while in the *Ishiyamadera engi* tale Rōben places the image on a rock pedestal, and then tries to move it but it will not budge, so that he is compelled to build a hall for the image on that spot.

Many other clues point to an influence of the Daigoji legend upon that of Ishiyamadera. Zaō Gongen is the central deity of Shugendō on Mt. Kimpu, the mountain where Shōbō is said to have revived Shugendō practice. Even more striking, the *Sanbō ekotoba* version of the Ishiyamadera legend speaks of an old man having dragged the stone (upon which the image is to be built) out of the water, which calls to mind a legend recorded in the late-Heian period *Todaiji yōroku* 東大寺要録 according to which Shōbō, with his superhuman physical strength, retrieves a large stone from Mt. Kimpu.[141] A thirteenth-century version of the same legend says he *retrieves the stone and uses it as a place of worship*.[142] Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, also figures in both stories: in the Ishiyamadera tale Zaō cannot share the gold in Mt. Kimpu for the completion of Tōdaiji because he is saving it for the "future world of Maitreya," while in the *Daigoji engi* the earth god suggests that Mt. Kasatori may be the place where

[141] Saeki, *Shōbō*, 56-57. We might also imagine that the *Sanbō ekotoba* tale might have contributed to that legend—it is not always easy to determine which way the influences go.
[142] Ibid.

Maitreya will appear in a future age. The Ishiyamadera legend explicitly links its founding to that of Tōdaiji, which also suggests the influence of Shōbō, who was deeply involved with all three sites and frequently traveled back and forth among them.

I think it is very likely that both the *Sanbō ekotoba* and *Ishiyamadera engi* versions of the founding of Ishiyamadera constitute a rewriting of the past, a re-mapping of legends surrounding Shōbō, Mt. Kasatori, and Daigoji onto a new site. The legends of one sacred mountain have been transposed to another, thus creating a place where Buddhas have always dwelled and practiced, where Nyoirin appears in visions to her devotees, and to which Maitreya will descend in a future age.

The future: a miraculous place

The advent of Nyoirin Kannon at Ishiyamadera sometime in the ninth or early tenth century not only influenced the story of the temple's past, but also inspired countless devotees to make pilgrimages to the temple. In the *Ishiyamadera engi* once again Nyoirin appears with her wondrous jewel to grant wishes for love, children, and other benefits. As in other miracle tale collections, the *Engi*'s mixture of fact and legend offers a fascinating chronicle of religiosity in the Heian and Kamakura periods.

This text indicates the importance not only of aristocratic lay patrons, but also of Ono Shingon monks in the propagation of Nyoirin faith in the Heian period. A number of the paintings in the *Ishiyamadera engi emaki* show monks engaged in *goma* and other esoteric rites to achieve specific ends, such as healing various illnesses. We can well imagine that monks practiced these rites on behalf of those who visited the temple

with their many requests; at the same time, their practice of Nyoirin rites insured that she would continue to dwell on the mountain and do her work.

One of the most important of such figures is Shunnyū, an illustrious palace monk (J. *naigu* 内供) and second-generation disciple of Shōbō who suffered from ill health and who, although he was recommended to become abbot of Daigoji, retired instead to Ishiyamadera, where he devoted himself to performing esoteric rites, particularly in his worship of Nyoirin. According to the *Engi* text Shunnyū became the third Shingon abbot of the temple. In one story he prays to Nyoirin, lamenting his ugliness and stupidity, and is then cured through a miraculous dream of two elderly monks.[143] As Brian Ruppert has noted, Shunnyū also appears to have been deeply interested in relic worship. The *Denbō ki* 傳法記, a document dated to 942 that was signed and copied by Shunnyū, draws on Chinese sources in its exposition of the miraculous powers of Buddha relics, and emphasizes the importance of such relics for rulers in cultivating and disseminating Buddhist faith.[144]

Another *Engi* episode relates how the monk Rekikai (ca. 890)—a child disciple of Shōbō's who later became a scholarly monk of Tōdaiji famed for his rainmaking abilities—reads the *Kujakukyō* 孔雀經 ("Peacock Sutra") near the "dragon pond" on the grounds of the temple. As he recites their names all the dragons come out of the water one by one and gather around him to listen, and afterwards they affectionately pick him up on their backs and carry him back to his grass hut.[145] This incident recalls

---

[143] *DNBZ* 117, 182b-183b.

[144] See Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 132-33 and *Denbō ki* 傳法記, in *Denbō ki to sono shihai monjo* 伝法記とその紙背文書, ed. Hayashiya Tatsusaburō 林屋辰三郎 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1991), 9-47, 89, 108.

[145] *DNBZ* 117, 185a-b. The title *Kujakukyō* 孔雀經 refers to one of six sutras devoted to the female deity Mahāmāyūrī Vidyārājñī (J. Kujaku Myōō 孔雀明王, Ch. Gunsho Mingwang), foremost among which is

Shōbō's own ability to tame dragons, which were connected with rainmaking rites since dragons were believed to control rainfall. Rainmaking was a virtue attributed to many of the greatest Ono Shingon monks, foremost among them the Ono patriarch Ningai, nicknamed Ame Sōjō 雨僧正 ("Rain Bishop"), who trained at Daigoji and in 991 founded nearby Mandaraji (now called Zuishin'in), from which the Ono branch of Shingon formally emerged.

Among the *Engi*'s many tales are several episodes involving miraculous healing of the illnesses of sovereigns and members of the imperial family, as well as instances in which the most mundane personal problems are solved: in one a lost document is found inside the belly of a fish bought according to instructions in a dream, while in another an official dreams of the correct pronunciation of a word in a translation he is anxiously preparing to present to the sovereign. Several tales turn on themes of fertility and love. In one example a dying marriage is revived: the tenth-century diarist Fujiwara Michitsuna no Haha 藤原道綱母[146] has fallen out of love with her husband, the Great Minister of the Left Fujiwara no Kaneie 藤原兼家 (929-990).[147] She goes on retreat at the temple and prays for help, has a mysterious dream in which a monk pours water out

---

the *Fomu da kongque mingwang jing* 佛母大孔雀明王經 (J. *Butsumo dai kujyaku myōō kyō*, Sk. *Mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñī*), translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛 (705-774), T.19, 982. In the text Śākyamuni speaks to Ānanda about the powers of Mahāmāyūrī's spell to protect against poisons and calamities of all sorts, and to bring rain, among other benefits. In iconographic representations Mahāmāyūrī is often depicted seated on the back of a peacock. Here the sutra not only protects the monk from being harmed by the dragons, but charms them to such an extent that they pick him up and carry him home on their backs, perhaps also echoing Mahāmāyūrī's iconographic pose.

[146] Author of one of the four major Heian diaries, *Kagerō Nikki* 蜻蛉日記, spanning the period from 954 to 974, in which she describes, among other things, her unhappy relationship with Kaneie.

[147] *DNBZ* 117, 184a. This episode is dated only the tenth day of the seventh month, with no year given, so unfortunately this miracle cannot be placed chronologically alongside her diary to see if the remedy was permanent or only temporary.

of a sake bottle onto her right knee, and returns home to find that she and Kaneie get along better than ever before.

In a historically linked episode, in 1230, when Sōhekimon'in 藻壁門院 (1209-1233)—the daughter of the powerful Heian court figure Kujō Kanezane 九条兼実 (1149-1207), and empress during the reign of retired emperor Go-Horikawa 後堀河 (1212-1234, r. 1221-1232)—finds out she is pregnant, her father offers a written prayer of gratitude to the temple.[148] In it he mentions several occasions in the past when empresses gave birth to sons as a result of the power of Nyoirin Kannon, including the aforementioned Kaneie's daughter Tōsanjōin 東三条院, empress of En'yū 圓融 (959-991, r. 969-984), who gave birth to the sovereign Ichijō 一条 (980-1011, r. 986-1011); and Fujiwara no Michinaga's 藤原道長 (966-1027) daughter Jōtōmon'in 上東門院 (988-1074, empress of Ichijō) who gave birth to two subsequent sovereigns, Goichijō 後一条 (1008-1036, r. 1016-1036) and Gosuzaku 後朱雀 (1009-1045, r. 1036-1045). According to Kanezane's text, as a result of these events these two powerful Heian figures, Kaneie and Michinaga, became devotees of Ishiyamadera.[149]

In one particularly vivid episode, themes of love and fertility converge in the image of the wish-fulfilling jewel. The story takes place "around the Tenji 天治 period" (1124-1126) and involves a senior grade, lower fifth-rank ceremonial bureau official named Fujiwara Kuniyoshi 藤原国能 and his Kyūshū-born wife. The couple is poor, and has no children. The woman laments her childless fate and fears that her absent husband has decided to leave her because of it. Overcome with sorrow, she goes

[148] Ibid., 194b-196a.
[149] Ibid., 195a. Murasaki Shikibu, to whom a separate episode of the *Engi* is devoted, served as a lady-in-waiting to Jōtōmon'in.

on retreat at the temple for seven days, where she prays desperately to Nyoirin Kannon. She dozes off and dreams that Nyoirin appears from behind the curtain of the altar, hands her a wish-fulfilling jewel and says, "This is your child."[150] She opens her eyes and finds the jewel in her hand, its color "neither gold nor red, but different from ordinary colors."[151] The woman hurries home, overjoyed, and soon her husband Kuniyoshi returns and they begin living together again. Now everything has changed—they are blessed with abundant wealth and possessions, and two years later she gives birth to a son, so that they are able to pass down to him their household and the wish-fulfilling jewel.

The tale goes on to describe how the jewel's virtue continues to visit all those into whose hands it falls. The son, Fujiwara Narizane 藤原業実, grows up to surpass his father in achievement as a Confucian scholar and court official, and at a younger age; his success is attributed to the power of the jewel. Then the jewel somehow comes into the possession of the sovereign Toba, which leads to the fulfillment of all his wishes, the birth of many children, and long life. Great Councilor (J. *dainagon* 大納言) Fujiwara Kunitsuna 藤原邦綱 (1122-1181) then inherits the jewel, and as a result advances to his illustrious court post and prospers throughout his life. According to this story, as a youth Kunitsuna, son of the official Fujiwara Morikuni 藤原盛国, had appeared to be someone unlikely to rise even to the rank of palace attendant (J. *kurando*,

[150] Ibid., 191b.
[151] Ibid.

kurōdo 藏人), so the fact that he became Great Councilor is credited with all the more wonder to the powers of the jewel.[152]

This tale, which apparently bears witness to twelfth-century events, is striking because of its resonance with the "jewel woman" passage of the *Kakuzen shō* with which we began our investigation. Here Nyoirin's gift of the jewel bestows professional success, prosperity, and fertility on a sovereign and several palace officials. In both cases the jewel is now embodied in physical form, in one case as the body of the "jewel woman," in the other the jewel that Nyoirin presents to her female devotee. Chinese sutras concerning Nyoirin emphasize the recitation of the *dhāraṇī* and equate it in a metaphoric sense with the *cintāmaṇi*, while these Japanese texts celebrate a *cintāmaṇi* that has now materialized in the form of a relic.

Shōbō himself was later considered to have been an avatar of Nyoirin Kannon, and Murasaki's presence too converges with that of Nyoirin. The *Engi* story about the moment of inspiration of the *Tale of Genji* is the only textual source for the Murasaki Shikibu "cult" at Ishiyamadera that I mentioned earlier.[153] Like many other stories in this collection, it features a woman with very human concerns. In it the empress has asked Murasaki to write a story, and Murasaki goes to the temple for a seven-day retreat to pray for inspiration. As she gazes out at the vast landscape, "her heart became clear and many elegant things appeared before her eyes and floated into her mind," and because these revelations occur so suddenly, she has not prepared any paper to write on. There is a copy of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in the hall, and—after silently

[152] Ibid., 191b-192a.
[153] Ibid., 188a-b.

asking the deity's permission—she writes down her thoughts on the back of it. Later, as an apology for the sin of having used the sutra text in this way, she copies one fascicle of it as an offering to Nyoirin, which the temple claims it still houses today. The last line of the story reads: "It is said that Murasaki Shikibu is a transformation body of Kannon."[154]

In this short episode we have a woman writer who commits a sin against Buddhism in her haste to get her thoughts on paper, who is in the next line deified as a transformation of Nyoirin herself. Perhaps these events speak to the closeness of this deity to human impulses and desires, such that the bodhisattva too appears to act impulsively, even to have her own wishes granted while at the same time granting those of others. It also gives us another glimpse of the inexorable process of mythological contagion, or "metonymic drift," in which a set of beliefs is transmitted or transposed through sheer proximity, from deity to devotee, mountain to mountain, mind to mind.

With the "esotericization" of Ishiyamadera in the ninth century, a belief in the power of Nyoirin Kannon took center stage at the temple. In a sense, Shōbō's original vision at Mt. Kasatori was transposed to a new site, mapped onto the landscape of another mountain, where his disciples then passed down that tradition. Ironically, this "dis-placed" cult of Nyoirin's miracles contributed to a belief in the holiness of the place itself so powerful that one had only to go there to have one's wishes fulfilled.

Murasaki's moment of inspiration can also perhaps be read as a metaphor for a pivotal moment in the history of Ishiyamadera, its ninth-century "esotericization." It is

---

[154] *DNBZ* 117, 188b.

like the moment the "plot" of a story is illuminated, when the significance of events surrounding a place becomes clear. Like a moment of literary inspiration, such a moment of historical inspiration reveals—that is, creates—the story of a place that extends into both the future and the past.

Conclusion

When we look back at Nyoirin's appearance in the form of the "jewel woman" in the *Kakuzen shō*, the passage with which we began this study, it now seems to have emerged out of a series of events that took place from the ninth century onward. Of course a bodhisattva has no decisive moment of "feminization," but in this paper we have traced several key moments in the process of Nyoirin's convergence with various wish-granting goddess figures. Such a study affords us a firsthand look at the way these changes happen, often for seemingly whimsical or random reasons, such as iconographic similarity, or merely geographical or textual proximity.

Nyoirin's transformation into the jewel woman now takes on a new significance. As we have seen, Nyoirin is paired with Juntei Kannon in the *Daigoji engi*, the earliest legend of the Ono tradition, through which Shōbō launched the future careers of these two bodhisattvas in Japan. The *Daigoji engi* also identifies Nyoirin and Juntei with the dragon princess Seiryō Gongen, herself the bearer of a wish-fulfilling jewel. Later, in the eleventh century, Seiryō speaks through the monk Shōkaku, and the two Kannon are once again enshrined as a result. And through Shōbō's influence at Ishiyamadera, Nyoirin emerges there too, jewel in hand, to bless sovereigns and aristocrats with their

hearts' desires. The temple's founding legend shows that Shōbō's involvement with what came to be called Shugendō was a driving force behind Nyoirin's popularity in Japan, a theme that calls for further exploration and research. From all these developments we can see that Nyoirin-as-*gyokujo* is only one face of a mythological complex that emerged in many forms in medieval Japan.

To the spiritual visionary the deity may be a personal visitor, but to the historian the deity reveals itself rather as a shifting field of negotiations between doctrinal and local authority, a name by which many gods come and go. It is possible that Nyoirin owed her popularity in medieval Japan to the local cults for which she served as a mask of Buddhist orthodoxy, that continued to thrive in her name. Perhaps those gods, dwelling on the margins of Buddhism, took possession of the figure of Nyoirin Kannon and lent it the power to revitalize the Shingon establishment and, by extension, the sovereign and the nation.

PART II. PROMISES, PROMISES: THE JEWEL-WHEEL BODHISATTVA IN CHINESE SOURCES

In this chapter we turn to the Chinese sources for ritual devotion to Ruyilun Guanyin, upon whose authority the Japanese tradition of Nyoirin worship depended. Until now in this study we have traced a thread of Nyoirin's various "feminine" associations within the Ono branch of Shingon, and we have witnessed a number of striking developments. The bodhisattva has emerged in the form of a goddess figure who proffers a wish-fulfilling jewel, and in a phenomenon that evolved along with the actual practice of "Nyoirin rites," for some devout believers both goddess and jewel have taken on at times a tangible visceral presence. The goddess appears in dreams and her jewel is the relic-jewel of the imperial regalia, or she bestows her jewel on the worthy so that it can fulfill all their wishes. The main Chinese sources upon which this tradition draws consist of a set of twelve Tantric Buddhist texts, most of which were translated during the Tang dynasty by Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, Bodhiruci, and their colleagues, and at least one of which had made its way to Japan by the middle of the eighth century. We will examine these works to discover what image of the deity they portray, and as we will see, they contain little precedent for the bodhisattva's later links to various goddess figures in Japan.

What Nyoirin became in medieval Japan was due to a particular set of shifting circumstances and religious priorities, and when we look at the "canonical" texts on which these developments are based, and upon which Japanese redactors draw heavily, a very different picture emerges. While many of this deity's iconographic and ritual elements were faithfully reproduced and practiced in Japan, in these texts the "Wish-Fulfilling Wheel" Avalokiteśvara is no earthly goddess but an androgynous bodhisattva who appears within a grandiose cosmic tableau of Buddhist salvation. Though images of *cintāmaṇi* do appear in these texts—as an attribute of the six-armed Ruyilun, or an object to be visualized as part of a ritual—above all here the *cintāmaṇi* serves as a metaphor for Ruyilun's *dhāraṇī,* his all-powerful spell than can fulfill all the wishes of the faithful. Here "worldly" and "transcendent" benefits, the attainment of supernatural powers and Buddhist awakening, blend seamlessly as the bodhisattva presents his spell out of a compassionate desire not only to lead all beings to salvation, but to make them happy in this life as well. We do find the raw materials out of which Japanese images of Nyoirin were later fashioned, but in this setting, the deity's visceral "presence" is less important than the rituals and spell he describes. Of course for the scholar these texts offer a kind of idealized rhetoric that sheds little light on whether or how these rites were actually practiced in India or China, yet they also give a sense of the "person" of Ruyilun Guanyin that can provide clues to help us understand how his identity was later transformed in Japan.

Introduction to the texts

Taishō volume 20 contains twelve texts devoted to Ruyilun Guanyin, grouped with the various collections of texts devoted to each of the esoteric Guanyin. They are the only texts in the Chinese Buddhist canon that treat this particular form of the bodhisattva in detail, and most of them served as the basis for beliefs and practices surrounding Nyoirin in Japan. In contrast to the highly practical nature of the *Kakuzen shō* and other Japanese esoteric Buddhist "manuals"—which are mainly concerned with ritual and iconographic details, and specific worldly benefits to be obtained—one of the main characteristics of these texts is their seamless blending of worldly and transcendent benefits, of Buddhist rhetoric and promises of the attainment of magical powers and miraculous vision. A large portion of all these texts consists of ritual instructions and explanations about how to create images, form *mudrā*, recite *dhāraṇī*, visualize the deity, and make offerings in the proper way, as well as promises of the benefits that will result. As we will see, certain texts have a more Buddhist rhetoric, while others seem to reflect a less "assimilated" form of Tantric ritual that has nevertheless been been given a Buddhist gloss.[1]

One of the texts that was considered most authoritative in Japan, and one of the earliest to reach the Nara capital in the eighth century, which we got a glimpse of earlier in our reading of a section of the "Nyoirin" chapter of the *Kakuzen shō*, is the *Ruyilun*

---

[1] Tantric elements began to appear in Chinese Buddhist texts around the third century C.E., came to dominate the Chinese Buddhist landscape during the Tang dynasty, and began to decline in the late eighth century, after Amoghavajra's death in 774. For a good general study of Chinese Tantric Buddhism, see Osabe Kazuo 長部和雄, *Tōdai mikkyōshi zakkō* 唐代密教史雜考 (Tokyo: Keisuisha, 1990), and also Osabe Kazuo, *Tōsō mikkyōshi ronkō* 唐宋密教史論考 (Tokyo: Mizuta bunshōdō, 1982). On the basic elements of Tantrism, see Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*.

tuoluoni jing, translated by Bodhiruci in 709.[2] This sutra is actually the most complete translation of a work that exists in four separate translated versions, all done around the late seventh to early eighth centuries: one by Yijing (635-713) in 710; another by Śikṣānanda (652-710) dated 695 to 704; and a third by Ratnacinta (Ch. Baosiwei 寶思惟, J. Hōshi'i, d. 721), dated 693 to 706.[3] The opening lines of Bodhiruci's translation claim that this text was originally part of a longer text, the *Dalianhua jingang sanmeiye jiachi bimi wuzhangai jing* 大蓮華金剛三昧耶加持祕密無障礙經 (J. *Dasirenge kongō samaya kaji himitsu mushōge kyō*), but no Chinese translation of this larger work has survived.

As we saw earlier, this so-called "proto-Tantric" *dhāraṇī* sutra features Avalokiteśvara presenting the "wish-fulfilling wheel *dhāraṇī*" to Śākyamuni and his multitude of attendants.[4] The bodhisattva first expounds the three versions of the *dhāraṇī* (from longest to most abbreviated, with the shortest version condensed to "oṃ va ra da pa dme hūṃ"), and then goes on to explain how to recite it and perform the recitation ritual; rites for making three types of medicine are also given, as well as instructions for a *homa* fire rite.[5] In addition, the text describes a mandala in the shape of a thirty-two-petalled lotus that features Ruyilun's two-armed form at its center, and also lists the multitude of benefits that can be gained from recitation of the spell, and from the various medicines. Particularly noteworthy here is a long list of visions the

[2] *T*. 20, 1080.
[3] *T*. 20, 1081; *T*. 20, 1082; and *T*. 20, 1083, respectively. The Kashmiri monk Ratnacinta's name has also been translated into Sanskrit from the Chinese as Maṇicinta, Adisena, and Cintāmaṇi.
[4] Several of these Chinese texts tend to refer to the bodhisattva by the general name of Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin) or "Master Perceiver" (Ch. Guanzizai); only occasionally is the name "Ruyilun" used to describe the bodhisattva himself, while more often it denotes the *dhāraṇī* or the actual iconographic elements of the jewel and wheel.
[5] One of the four translations, Yijing's, mentions that these medicinal rites exist, but are secret and not included in the text. See *T*. 20, 1081, 197b6.

practitioner can obtain through the application of "eye medicine," a part of the text we looked at earlier in this study.

Another text, translated sometime during the Tang dynasty by Jietuoshizi 解脱師子 (n.d.), echoes a similar standard sequence for the *dhāraṇī* recitation rite. This is the *Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa* 都表如意摩尼轉輪聖王次第念誦祕密最要略法 (J. *Tohyō nyoi moni tenrin jōō shidai nenju himitsu sai yō ryaku hō*), which was also given particular attention in a number of medieval Japanese texts, including the *Kakuzen shō* and *Keiran shūyōshū*.[6] The "Nyoirin" chapter of the *Kakuzen shō*, for example, cites it several times about ritual details and worldly benefits.[7] As in the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, this text describes the proper way to perform recitation and *homa* rituals, as well as the benefits to be obtained as a result; it makes fleeting reference to the "six arms" of Ruyilun and the bodhisattva emitting "white light" from between the eyebrows, but offers no further details on how the bodhisattva's image should be represented.[8]

While the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* and its variant translations offer instructions for creating an image of Ruyilun that is two-armed, however, another text, the *Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni lun tuoluoni niansong fa* 觀世音菩薩如意摩尼輪陀羅尼念誦法 (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu nyoi monirin darani nenjuhō*), translated by Ratnacinta, contains similar recitation rites for the Ruyilun spells, and is also notable for its description of

---

[6] *T.* 20, 1089.
[7] *DNBZ* 47, 153-204.
[8] *T.* 20, 1089, 219a19-20. Another text that offers a slightly different ritual sequence is the *Foshuo ruyilun lianhua xin rulai xiuxing guanmen yi* 佛說如意輪蓮華心如來修行觀門儀 (J. *Bussetsu nyoirin rengeshin nyorai shugyō kanmongi*), *T.* 20, 1090, translated by Cixian 慈賢 (n.d.) during the Southern Song dynasty (960-1279). Because it is somewhat later than our other translations, and is not cited in our Japanese sources, this text is of less interest for our purposes than those that were circulating in Japan at an earlier date.

Ruyilun's six-armed form, which in fact is mentioned in a total of six of these texts. We will look more closely at these two iconographic variations shortly. None of this group of twelve texts describes any of the other forms of the bodhisattva that appear in the *Kakuzen shō* and other Japanese texts—the four-armed, eight-armed, ten-armed, and so forth; as we saw earlier, these variant iconographic forms may come from a lost section of the *Jinlun zhouwang jing*, to which the *Kakuzen shō* attributes them, though they do not appear in the surviving version of that text that we have.

Another text, attributed to Amoghavajra, which is still used today as the basis for the Jūhachidō ("Eighteen Paths") initiatory rites for novice monks in the Ono branch of Shingon, is the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui* 觀自在菩薩如意輪念誦儀軌 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin nenju giki*).[9] This text describes a series of *mudrā* that are to be performed as a ritual sequence with Ruyilun as the main deity. Here too we appear to be dealing with part of a longer work, the *Guanding daochang jing* 潅頂道場經 (J. *Kanjō dōjō kyō*), now lost. The two texts that follow this one, the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie* 觀自在菩薩如意輪瑜伽 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin yūga*), also translated by Amoghavajra, and the *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao* 觀自在如意輪菩薩瑜伽法要 (J. *Kanjizai nyoirin bosatsu yuga hōyō*), translated by his master Vajrabodhi, are nearly identical in content, and complete our reading of the *Niansong yigui* with additional ritual instructions and explanations.[10]

The text that follows these in the *Taishō* sequence was at one time believed by Japanese scholars to have been written in Chinese by Kūkai himself; but Ono Genmyō

[9] *T.* 20, 1085.
[10] *T.* 20, 1086 and *T.* 20, 1087, respectively.

小野玄妙 points out that since it appears in Kūkai's *Shōrai mokuroku* 請来目録, it is unlikely to have been his own work. Ono supports the hypothesis of the Edo-period (1600-1867) Shingon monk and scholar Jōgon 浄嚴 (1639-1702), who suggested that it was rather the work of Kūkai's master Huiguo.[11] This is the *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue* 如意輪菩薩觀門義注祕訣 (J. *Nyoirin bosatsu kanmon gichū hiketsu*), which further elaborates themes from the previous three texts.[12] Like them, it lauds the figure of the six-armed Ruyilun. It also contains extensive explanations of the meanings of individual Siddham characters in Ruyilun's *dhāraṇī*, and instructions for their visualization.

One other text that deserves mention here for the unique narrative and ritual procedure it describes is the one that pairs Nyoirin with the seven stars of Ursa Major, the *Qixing ruyilun bimiyao jing*.[13] In this text, also translated by Amoghavajra, the narrative is set once again in a Mahāyāna tableau featuring the Buddha and his disciples, only this time King Prasenajit comes to the Buddha to ask for help because the city of Kapilavastu is surrounded by the great army of its enemy Kokila.[14] The Buddha then expounds the "seven-star fire altar" ritual, in which an image of Ruyilun—here called "Wish-Fulfilling Wheel King Bodhisattva" (Ch. Ruyilun wang pusa 如意輪

[11] Ono Genmyō 小野玄妙, ed. *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* 佛書解説大辭典, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppan, 1933-36, 1974, 1988), 369.
[12] *T.* 20, 1088.
[13] *T.* 20, 1091. This text has a Japanese colophon dating to 1820, and *T.* 20, 1088, the text possibly attributed to Huiguo, has a Japanese colophon dating to 1708; but the lateness of the versions of these texts recorded by *Taishō* redactors does not seem to cast doubt upon their authenticity for Ono. See Ono, *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten*, vol. 8, 369 and vol. 5, 334-5. The fact that the text is quoted in medieval Japanese ritual manuals would seem to support his view (see n. 15 below).

On the other hand, Henrik H. Sørensen suggests that this text is a late composition, pointing out that its content bears little resemblance to other texts about the seven stars of the Northern Dipper. See Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Worship of the Great Dipper in Korean Buddhism," in Henrik H. Sørensen, ed. *Religions in Traditional Korea* (Copenhagen: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1995), 77.
[14] King Prasenajit ruled the state of Kośala, where the Buddha's native city of Kapilavastu was located.

王菩薩, J. Nyoirin ō bosatsu)—is made in the center of a seven-spoked wheel, among whose spokes are interspersed the deities of the seven stars of Ursa Major, as well as the goddess Hārītī.[15] This method causes the enemy to quickly depart, and the bodhisattva Shentongwang 神通王 (J. Jintsūō), amazed at this turn of events, goes to visit Ruyilun and praises his virtue. In response the bodhisattva recites his secret mantra and *mudrā* for his divine visitor. This is another text that became important in Japan: it is cited in the *Asabashō* and *Besson zakki*, though not in the *Kakuzen shō*.[16]

All these works are ritual texts in the sense that they offer explicit instructions for reciting Nyoirin's *dhāraṇī*, performing *mudrā* to go with particular mantras or *dhāraṇī* throughout the texts, what offerings or medicinal substances to prepare, how to create the image of the bodhisattva, how to visualize his arrival, and what the wondrous results of the correct and conscientious performance of all these actions will be. Thus the "Nyoirin rite" (or "rites") (J. *nyoirin hō* 如意輪法) mentioned in medieval Japanese sources may refer to any number of the rituals described in these works, but always involves recitation of the *dhāraṇī*, and generally follows a standard Tantric ritual sequence in which the devotee creates an altar with an image of the deity, prepares offerings, recites the *dhāraṇī* or mantra a specified number of times, summons the deity by means of this recitation and in some cases visualization, and then sends him back to whence he came at the conclusion of the rite.

[15] Ch. Helidi mu, J. Karitei mo 訶利低母. Originally a child-devouring "mother of demons," in Japan Hārītī came to be worshipped as a benevolent child-giving goddess who is sometimes considered to be a popular form of Juntei Kannon.

[16] See *T.* Zuzō 9, 3190, 198b24-28; and *T.* Zuzō 3, 164b24-26 and 176b8-20, with images of the "seven-star fire altar" on 174-75.

Though all these texts offer both detailed ritual instructions and "worldly" as well as "other-worldly," or spiritual, benefits to devotees, they can be roughly organized into two groups—those that more strongly emphasize the attainment of worldly benefits, and those that tend rather to emphasize Buddhist ideals. In general, the four variant translations of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, though they pay lip service to Buddhist virtues and the bodhisattva's compassion, are most of all concerned with describing the astounding results that can be gained through proper recitation of the spell, including healing illness, driving away demons, defeating enemies, gaining wealth, and so forth. The same is true of the *Niansong fa*, in which benefits described resemble a greatly condensed version of those mentioned in the *Tuoluoni jing*, as well as the *Qixing ruyilun bimiyao jing*, whose centerpiece is a method for defeating enemies. Not surprisingly, the more "Buddhist" virtue-oriented set of texts, which engage less in the promise of benefits and more in the praise of the dharma and its embodiments, serve as the basis for the Jūhachidō rites in Shingon. These include the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui*, *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao*, and *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue*. Our translation done in the Southern Song, the *Foshuo ruyilun lianhua xin rulai xiuxing guanmenyi*, can also be grouped in this category.[17]

The *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui* is one of the most "Buddhist" of our texts in this sense, and indeed serves as the basis for the elaborations of the other three

[17] Another feature of the twelve texts in our collection is that eight are written in a prose style and four in a "verse" style (with each line consisting of two groups of either five or seven characters). This more "Buddhist"-oriented group contains three of the texts in verse, including the *Ruyilun yuqie* (*T*. 20, 1086), the *Yuqie fayao* (*T*. 20, 1087), and the *Xiuxing guanmen yi* (*T*. 20, 1090). The *Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa* (*T*. 20, 1089) is also composed in verse.

mentioned above. Its first few lines immediately suggest that we are no longer in a world of magical Indian ritual, but an environment more suggestive of the ideals of the Buddhist monk, as the practitioner is instructed to escape the ocean of birth and death, receive initiation from a master, and build a practice hall in a remote mountain forest.[18] The *Kakuzen shō*, perhaps taking the above as a given for Shingon monks, cites only the instructions that follow, which say that one should then build a practice hall and enshrine the deity in a clean room, in a mountain forest with flowing water, and there recite the mantra facing east. Instructions for preparing the altar follow, and though the text says it does not matter if the practitioner bathes himself in preparation for the rituals or not, it does make clear that he should put himself in a "contemplative state of mind."[19] The series of *mudrā* and contemplations follows, making up the body of the text, and at the end it promises that if the practitioner is able to complete this series of recitations three times a day, "sin obstacles will be extinguished and he will attain great wisdom, *samādhi* (meditative concentration) will be achieved, the deity will appear before him, and he will be able to obtain virtue just as is expounded in the sutras."[20] While in the description of the ritual sequences we do find mention of causing demons to scatter, achieving long life and happiness, and so forth, its most pervasive theme is not to achieve worldly benefits, but to become a better Buddhist.[21]

---

[18] *T*. 20, 1085, 203c14-18; *DNBZ* 47, 160a.
[19] *T*. 20, 1085, 203c18-23.
[20] Ibid., 206c3-5.
[21] In passing we might note that another classically "Buddhist" element in many of these texts is their frequent reference to Pure Land themes. The *Tuoluoni jing*, for example, states clearly that the practitioner will be rewarded for his efforts with a vision of Ārya Avalokiteśvara 聖觀音, or Amitābha 阿弥陀, or the Pure Land (*T*. 20, 1080, 189c10-12). It also promises rebirth after death in Amitābha's western Pure Land. (*T*. 20, 1080, 194a11-12). The *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui* contains similar references, as in the line "you will be born in the pure and wondrous lands of the buddhas" (*T*. 20, 1085, 204c9-10).

A passage cited from the *Dubiao* in the *Kakuzen shō* offers a parallel to these opening instructions to retire to a mountain forest, which raises another interesting question about Ruyilun's "Buddhist" identity. Here the sutra instructs the practitioner to dwell in the mountains, or at the edge of a lake, or to dwell in a clean room within a temple, or to prepare vessels for offerings in a "god tower for buddha relics" (Ch. *fo sheli shenta* 佛舎利神塔, J. *butsu shari shintō*), though the *Kakuzen shō* has it as a "god tower for god relics" (Ch. *shen sheli shenta* 神舎利神塔, J. *shin shari shintō*).[22] This reference to "god tower" (or "god stupa"), as well as to "god relics," presents a puzzle: while *shen* 神 can also mean "holy" or "wondrous," the presence of the term "shen sheli" in the *Kakuzen shō* version of this passage suggests that we are actually dealing with the notion of the relics of a god, rather than a buddha. It raises the question of perhaps even whether Ruyilun was originally conceived of in this way, as a "god" rather than a bodhisattva, and may allude to the popular or Brahmanic origins of many Avalokiteśvara sutras of this period.[23] The reference to a "tower" or "stupa" sounds Buddhist, yet "god" suggests otherwise.[24]

In our study of these texts it is worth taking a closer look, at this point, at exactly what "worldly" and "other-worldly" benefits they promise. Because so many Tantric texts of this genre read like endless litanies of benefits to be obtained, they tend to blur together

[22] *T.* 20, 1089, 217b20; *DNBZ* 47, 160a.
[23] Nyoirin also sometimes goes by various Buddhist names, in addition to "bodhisattva." Particularly in the Song-dynasty translation *Foshuo ruyilun lianhua xin rulai xiuxing guanmen yi,* we find several references to Nyoirin as a Tathāgata or *vidyārāja*. See, for example, T. 1090, 223a29, 223c3, and 223c28.
[24] For an intriguing discussion of similar themes in the *Peihua jing* 悲華經 (J. *Hike kyō*), in which both gods and relics are said to be manifestations of Śākyamuni' s body, see Takahashi Yūsuke 高橋悠介, "Enman'i-za to Zenchiku" 円満井座の舎利と禅竹, *Zeami: Chūsei no geijutsu to bunka* 中世の芸術と文化 3 (2005): 131-37.

and resist classification or close reading. But they can offer a valuable window into the idealized image of the bodhisattva himself. This is particularly true since in Japan, as the "Wish-Fulfilling Wheel" Kannon, Nyoirin was famed for the benefits she could bestow, including not only wealth, supernatural powers, and other rewards listed in these texts, but also several that do not appear here at all.

One of the most obvious questions that arises in the study of these benefits, though it is usually passed over by scholars, is the justification for including "worldly benefits" in a Buddhist text at all. Despite its anti-desire rhetoric, however, Buddhism in every culture has offered devotees worldly benefits as a reward for their faith and practice, mainly through the transference of merit from others further along on the Buddhist path. Bodhisattvas, as well as ritual specialist or ascetic monks and nuns, could use their levels of advancement on the path to buddhahood to bring comfort to all sentient beings. Also, though these texts draw a distinction between "worldly" and "transcendent" benefits, the two blend seamlessly together, almost as though one naturally accompanies the other. Though we find two distinct kinds of rhetoric in these texts—promises of wondrous benefits, and exhortations to strive and follow the Buddhist path—in Japan they were quoted and valued mainly for the benefits these rituals were said to produce. In the Chinese texts, both spiritual virtue and worldly benefits are part of a bigger picture of cosmic liberation. A vision emerges of the practitioner glowing, loved, respected, served, enlightened, having tamed and subdued not only his own passions but also all those beings who surround him, whether human, demon, or deity. The narratives laud the compassion of the bodhisattva as the source of all these blessings, while in our Japanese instruction manuals benefits are isolated and

individual rites described in largely technical terms, without the "vision" found in the Chinese texts.

Once the devotee is blessed in this way, his or her actions as well as the rewards received may transcend conventional "Buddhist" morality, as in the case of the Japanese vision of the "jewel woman" promising a monk that she will become his lover. For example, in the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* the devotee is told that if he finds himself imprisoned and bound by shackles or chains, but he is carrying Ruyilun's medicine that has been properly and devotedly prepared, he will be freed.[25] (There is no mention of whether or not he might be chained or shackled as a result of his own actions.) A similar promise appears in Yijing's version of the text: "Imprisonment for the five crimes can be cancelled" altogether, which likely refers to "imprisonment" in the Avīci hell, the lowest and deepest hell of them all.[26] The *Tuoluoni jing* explicitly promises several times that those suffering in the Avīci hell will be freed.[27] Thus the bodhisattva's power can transcend not only the karma of the past, but also the consequences of deeds in this life. This type of rhetoric is by no means unique to Ruyilun, but his status as "wish-fulfilling" deity makes them an intriguing subject of investigation.

Though much of the content of these texts is devoted to lengthy descriptions of ritual details, when promises of benefits are expounded, certain patterns emerge. Devotees may achieve visions of the bodhisattva, buddhas, Pure Land, and so forth; be healed from all kinds of illness; gain wealth and abundance; achieve the exorcistic power to drive away the "obstacle-creating" demons that are blamed for many of life's

---

[25] *T.* 20, 1080, 194b10-11.
[26] *T.* 20, 1081, 197a7-8.
[27] *T.* 20, 1080, 189b26-7, 194b4-5, 195b3-4.

misfortunes; and gain political and personal influence over others. These themes surface with more or less prominence in the various texts, and in general they reflect a preoccupation with material wealth and worldly power that is scarcely different from that of the twenty-first century. The bodhisattva's power is both fierce and compassionate, exorcistic and benevolent. It is safe to say, however, that the "person" of Ruyilun, as with other forms of Guanyin, is gentle rather than angry or fierce as other Buddhist deities can be.

The main reason here for vanquishing demons is their limitless capacity to create illness and problems of all kinds. In fact, often exorcism and healing are only two aspects of the same action: to remove illness and its cause. As we saw in the earlier part of this dissertation, when Ruyilun first recites his spell in the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, all the demon palaces shake and the demons themselves tremble with fear, creating a general scene of mayhem that gives the reader a sense of the spell's power to overcome demonic influence. This same theme is borne out elsewhere as it is more explicitly related to healing: for example, in another passage of the same text, we are told that the medicine to be held in the mouth (one of the three types of medicine the text prescribes, the other two being medicine for the eyes and medicine to be carried) will cause the practitioner to attain a long life; will cause spirits of mountains and streams, of trees and rocks, as well as other demonic entities to run away in terror; and will cause him to attain foreknowledge of his destiny and extinguish the five deadly sins.[28] Thus the flight of demons, who cause so many problems in human life, is one step toward individual

[28] *T.* 20, 1080, 194b28-29. The five deadly sins (J. *gomukenzai* 五無間罪, *gogyakuzai* 五逆罪) in Buddhism are to kill one's mother, father, or an arhat, to to shed the blood of a buddha, and to break the solidarity of the sangha.

salvation. This "exorcism" of demons sometimes becomes explicit, as when purification is to be achieved through violent visualization: in the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, the practitioner is instructed to contemplate a vajra mallet striking a mountain as if to break it, and continues, "Angry words and angry forms can purify evil karma."[29]

The benevolent healing aspect of Ruyilun's power is even more pronounced, and offers a precedent for later Japanese notions of her healing abilities—to guarantee safe childbirth, for example—that extend beyond the scope of what is found in these texts. A single brief passage in the *Niansong fa* does however foreshadow this aspect of Ruyilun's power: "If a woman is pregnant," the text says, "merely reciting it will certainly achieve a great effect."[30] Healing also seems to extend beyond the body into the surrounding world, as though there is no real separation between the two. Thus in the *Tuoluoni jing*'s description of the three types of medicine, it is evident that they will not only heal the illnesses described, but also serve a talismanic purpose. With each seven-day period that the eye medicine is applied, it causes increasingly fantastic supernatural visions to appear,[31] but also offers exorcistic power, military victory, and liberation from Avīci hell, among other benefits.[32] The medicine to be held in the mouth promises not only physical healing but also victory in warfare, the submission of demons, and graceful speech; furthermore, as a result of carrying it, all kinds of people will venerate the devotee and submit to his will.[33] The *homa* or fire rite produces various beneficial results, including long life, love and respect, control over rainfall, and

[29] *T.* 20, 1086, 207c28-29. The "vajra mallet" (Ch. *jingangchu* 金剛杵, J. *kongōsho*, Sk. *vajra-vara*) is a weapon of ancient India that in Buddhism symbolizes the destruction of ignorance.
[30] *T.* 20, 1084, 203a19-20.
[31] *T.* 20, 1080, 195a22-c7.
[32] Ibid., 195a26-195b4.
[33] *T.* 20, 1080, 194b22-194c8, 194c27-195a8.

so forth, culminating in the attainment of enlightened wisdom (Ch. *puti* 菩提, J. *bodai*, Sk. *bodhi*) and "not falling back into evil ways."[34] Promises of wealth also abound, not only jewels but provisions, including "wealth, jewels, corn, rice, fruit."[35]

Abundance is one thing, power is another, and another major theme here that seems to open the way for later developments in Japan is attainment of the power to dominate others, whether human, demon or deity—to make them submit to the devotee's will, serve him, and even love him. Certainly this bodhisattva's ability to confer supernatural powers was celebrated in Japan, and finds explicit expression in these texts.[36] Ruyilun's promise to cause one to be favored by sovereigns and other highly placed individuals also appears here, though in somewhat general terms: In the *Tuoluoni jing* description of benefits to be gained from its medicine to be held in the mouth, it promises that all those who see the devotee will rejoice, and wherever he goes noble people will love and respect him.[37] We also find this passage in Śikṣānanda's translation of the same text, which in the initial list of the *dhāraṇī*'s benefits promises that its recitation will cause sovereigns and government officials to rule honorably, and that they will be loved by the people.[38] The same text also describes the rite for preparing the medicine to be carried that will cause people to rejoice upon seeing one.[39] Though these particular passages are not cited in the *Kakuzen shō* list of worldly benefits, in a sense they foreshadow the various benefits related to love and sexuality

[34] Ibid., 195c23-196a9.
[35] Ibid., 203a27-28.
[36] See, for example, *T*. 20, 1089, 218b13.
[37] *T*. 20, 1080, 194c29-195a4.
[38] *T*. 20, 1082, 198b1-2. Bodhiruci's translation puts the same passage slightly differently, saying that the devotee will "see sovereigns and their great vassals respectfully making offerings," presumably to the devotee himself. *T*. 20, 1080, 189c16.
[39] *T*. 20, 1082, 198c14.

that Kakuzen cites from the *Beppongi.* Like many other Tantric deities, but perhaps especially because of his "wish-fulfilling wheel" spell, Ruyilun emerges in these Chinese texts as a figure who grants, among other things, power over other people, as a bodhisattva who can make others love you—which, in a world obsessed with political machinations, placing one's male heirs in high positions, and gaining favor at court, would certainly have found an eager clientele.

All of these texts were of part of a great wave of Tantric Buddhist sutras that were translated by the great masters Śubhakarasiṃha 善無畏 (Ch. Shanwuwei, J. Zemmui, d. 735), Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, and others in the early to middle Tang dynasty, which might well lead one to ask if these particular "translations" might not have been written in China, as many texts of this genre were. As Michel Strickmann has pointed out, Amoghavajra for one often "refurbished" Tantric texts that had already been translated into Chinese, outfitting them with his own terminology and ritual orientation; but as it turns out, many of these texts had been originally composed in Chinese centuries earlier.[40] Nevertheless, in the case of this particular group of texts, though no known Sanskrit versions of any of them survive, there is good reason to believe that most were translated from Indian originals. Many examples in them suggest not only Indian but often Brahmanic origins, as was the case with so many Tantric texts, in which the rhetoric and rituals of "Tantrism" and "Tantric Buddhism" are sometimes hardly distinguishable from each other.[41]

[40] Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 229.

[41] Two Tibetan translations of our texts do exist. The Tibetan equivalent for three variant translations of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* (*T.* 20, 1080, 1082, and 1083) is titled *'Phags-pa spyan-ras-gzigs-dbang-phyug-*

One of the unique features of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing,* for example, is that it contains a reference to how many times people of different social levels and castes are instructed to recite Ruyilun's *dhāraṇī* in each of the "six periods" for seven days: a sovereign 1080 times, an empress or concubine 900 times, a prince 800 times, a princess 700 times, a minister 600 times, a *brahmin* 500 times, a *kṣatriya* 400 times, a *vaiśya* 300 times, a *śūdra* 200 times, a monk 108 times, a layman 106 times, a laywoman 103 times, a boy 100 times, and a girl 90 times.[42] This passage not only shows that as far as this text is concerned practice of the *dhāraṇī* is apparently open to everyone, regardless of gender or social status, but also likely reflects the presence of a non-Buddhist tradition that found its way into this text. If one were composing an orthodox-looking Tantric Buddhist text in Chinese, one might be unlikely to include such a passage. Other references that suggest Indian origins appear in the various versions of this sutra, particularly in Bodhiruci's translation, as when the practitioner is instructed as part of a rite to bathe either the fruit of a lotus or a *cintāmaṇi* with the "five

---

gi gsang-ba'i mdsod thogs-pa med-pa'i yid-bzhin gyi 'khor-lo'i snying-po zhes-bya-ba'i gzungs. See *P* 370 (vol. 11) and *P* 523 (vol. 11); according to the catalogue this text was translated from Chinese by Chos-grub (Ch. Facheng 法成, active 820's to 840's). The Tibetan equivalent of our Song-dynasty Chinese text *Foshuo ruyilun lianhuaxin rulai xiuxing guanmenyi* (*T.* 20, 1090) is titled *'Phags-pa sgyu-ma lta-bu'i ting-nge-'dzin ces-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*, with its Sanskrit title given as *Māyopama-samādhi-nāma Mahāyāna-sūtra*. It appears to have been translated from Sanskrit by Surendrabodhi (9th century) and Ye-shes-sde (8th-9th century), which would make the Tibetan version earlier than its Chinese counterpart. See *P* 798 (vol. 32). I thank Luis O. Gómez for kindly providing this information.

[42] T. 20, 1080, 190a10-20. Variations of this passage also appear in *T.* 1082, 198b18-27 and *T.* 20, 1083, 201a14-21.

In Chinese thought the "six periods" refers to the six phases of a day, which correspond to the hours surrounding early morning (6:00 a.m.), midday (12:00 p.m.), sunset (6:00 p.m.), early evening (8:00 p.m.), night (10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.), and predawn (4:00 a.m.).

The four main castes in India that are mentioned here are *brahmin* (priests, teachers, scholars), *kṣatriya* (warriors), *vaiśya* (merchants), and *śūdra* (artisans, farmers, service providers).

For a brief discussion of this text see also Yü, *Kuan-yin,* 70-71.

pure [substances]" of a cow before reciting the spell over it.[43] In other cases Sanskrit words are left transliterated, as in the case of the term *agada* (lit. "anti-illness" or illness-healing) medicine in Śikṣānanda's translation of the text, while in other versions the term is dropped.[44] Furthermore, the lists of ingredients in the "three medicines" section of the text contain standard Indian medical substances, such as white mustard seed, camphor, and ox bezoar.[45]

As we have already seen in our earlier exploration of the Nyoirin chapter of the *Kakuzen shō,* when we compare these Chinese texts with the medieval Japanese ritual and iconographic "handbooks" that draw upon them as authoritative source material, a basic difference in approach becomes evident. While these Chinese texts present a grand Mahāyāna Buddhist tableau in which Ruyilun Guanyin offers his miraculous spell for the benefit of all sentient beings, and inspire with promises not only of limitless wish-fulfillment but also of spiritual virtue and merit, the Japanese handbooks eliminate much of the "Buddhist" rhetoric in the texts and instead break down the material into discrete, manageable pieces that seem most likely to help the practitioner obtain efficacious ritual results.

Also noteworthy in these Chinese texts is the absence of certain strong themes surrounding Nyoirin in Japan—the image of the bodhisattva as a female deity, particularly a *nāga*, and the many feminine associations with which the *cintāmaṇi* links her. Clearly there is nothing inherently feminine about the *cintāmaṇi*, even in Japan;

---

[43] *T.* 20, 1080, 193a9-10. In India the cow has long been considered a sacred messenger of the god Brahmā. Lit. "five pures" (Ch. *wujing* 五淨), which refers to the cow's urine, feces, and milk, as well as to the refined forms of milk, cream, and ghee, when these substances have not yet touched the ground. These "five pures" occasionally appear in Indian Tantric texts.
[44] *T.* 20, 1082, 198c11.
[45] See for example *T.* 20, 1080, 194a14-195c13.

rather, it happened that the jewel linked Nyoirin with various female deities. In Japan Nyoirin's identity became highly "localized" as her image converged with those of various other deities: she was to be found at Ishiyamadera, or on Mt. Kasatori, presiding over powerful pilgrimage sites where she granted blessings to devotees. In these Chinese texts, however, as in most Buddhist sutras, though the narrative may be set in a particular location, there is no implication that the deity dwells exclusively in that place; the texts present rather a universal tableau, outside of time and history, and in that sense the *dhāraṇī*'s power is accessible to all. The deity's physical presence is to be experienced not by going to a particular place, as was increasingly the case in medieval Japan, but through the practice of the rites described in the texts.

Of course, the Japanese texts were not meant to replace the Chinese translations of Ruyilun sutras. Both probably circulated in various lineages within esoteric Buddhist monastic circles, with the Japanese texts meant to serve as a guide to the sutras' most salient points. Before even Kūkai brought Ruyilun texts and images back from China in the early ninth century, the bodhisattva's *dhāraṇī* and instructions for making his image were already known and likely practiced in Japan. During this period many esoteric sutras were recited and their rituals performed in a setting very different from the Chinese setting where they were earlier introduced, and I would suggest that in this environment the way was opened for radical new connections and interpretations to be forged in Japan.[46] Certainly Kūkai did much to promote Nyoirin's popularity within his own "orthodox" Shingon tradition, as did Saichō 最澄 (767-822), founder of Japanese

[46] See, for example, Abé Ryūichi, "(No) Traces of Esoteric Buddhism: Dhāraṇī and the Nara Buddhist Literature," in *The Weaving of Mantra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 151-84.

Tendai, in the esoteric works he brought back from China, but at the same time Nyoirin's texts and images may already have taken on a life of their own as they converged with those of other deities in Japan.

One other important factor that a study of these texts brings to light is the original name of Ruyilun. Many scholars have reconstructed the name "Ruyilun Guanyin" as "Cintāmaṇicakra-avalokiteśvara," that is, the "Wish-Fulfilling Jewel Wheel Avalokiteśvara." The Siddham characters within the "fundamental" *dhāraṇī* spell given in Bodhiruci's translation, however, suggest rather that the bodhisattva's Sanskrit name may be "Cakravarti-cintāmaṇi-avalokiteśvara," which means something closer to "Wheel-Turning Monarch Wish-Fulfilling Jewel Avalokiteśvara."[47] Unlike the former version, this Sanskrit form of Ruyilun's name clearly alludes to the "wheel" of the dharma-wheel-turning, enlightened Buddhist monarch, or *cakravartin*, which may have had something to do with the bodhisattva's many sovereign associations in Japan. Our reading of the bodhisattva's Sanskrit name in these texts raises a larger question: exactly what are the "jewel" and "wheel" in these works, and to what do they refer, together or separately? We turn now to a brief exploration of this question, along with the related matter of Ruyilun's iconography.

[47] See *T.* 20, 1080, 188c9-26. The text that may have been composed by Huiguo, the *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue*, also spells out "Cakravarti-cintāmaṇi" in Siddham characters as part of the *dhāraṇī*. *T.* 20, 1088, 216a22-b2.

Images of the jewel-wheel bodhisattva

A. *The dhāraṇī sutras and the two-armed Nyoirin*

The name "Ruyilun," or Wish-Fulfilling Wheel, suggests that the attributes of the jewel and wheel define the iconographic form of this bodhisattva—just as the Eleven-Headed Kannon has eleven heads, the Thousand-Armed a thousand arms, and the Horse-Headed the head of a horse. Ruyilun's attributes of the "wish-fulfilling jewel and wheel," or "wish-fulfilling wheel," however, turn out to function in a more complex way. The name of the bodhisattva derives not merely from his attributes, but also from the wish-fulfilling function of his *dhāraṇī,* as described in the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* and its variant translations. The two-armed form of Ruyilun that appears in a later section of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* does not hold a *cakra*, but a lotus blossom upon which rests a *cintāmaṇi* in one hand, with the other in "preaching" (Ch. *shuofa* 説法, J. *seppō)* *mudrā*. Let us take a closer look at the nature of Ruyilun's jewel-as-*dhāraṇī*, and his iconography, in this group of texts, to get a clearer picture of this bodhisattva and his name.

In this regard, one of the first things we notice is that all four versions of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* text equate Ruyilun's *dhāraṇī* with the metaphor of a wish-fulfilling jewel or wish-fulfilling tree. The spell *is* the jewel, as in this passage from Bodhiruci's translation, in which the bodhisattva tells Śākyamuni and his retinue that he would like to offer his spell for the benefit of all sentient beings:

> World-Honored One, this *dhāraṇī* spell possesses a great mysterious power (Ch. weishen 威神, J. *ijin*) like a heavenly wish-fulfilling tree (Ch. *tianyishu* 天意樹, J. *teniju*). It causes a rain of great jewels to rain down for all enlightened seers. All that is desired will be attained, [as with] the *cintāmaṇi* (Ch. *monizhu* 摩尼珠, J. *maniju*). It can fulfill all sentient beings' highest wishes.[48]

Śākyamuni then praises the bodhisattva and grants him permission to recite the spell, which he joyfully does. Here the spell is equated with both a wishing-jewel and a wishing-tree, two common Indian motifs. The same passage is echoed in the other three versions of this text.[49]

At the same time, Bodhiruci's translation also mentions the "*mani* jewel" (using the same term, 摩尼珠) in two other places, as an object to be used in the rituals the text describes. This term could suggest a Buddha relic, a jewel believed to possess magical powers, any precious jewel, or perhaps even simply to a jewel or stone with the proper teardrop "wish-fulfilling jewel" shape. In one passage mentioned earlier, near the end of a series of twenty-eight *mudrā* and their corresponding mantras, in describing the "spell for purifying and subduing," the text instructs the practitioner to use either lotus fruits or *cintāmaṇi*, bathe them with the five pure substances of a cow, recite the spell over each jewel seven times, string them together into a rosary and then recite the spell 108 times.[50] In another passage, after describing the method for preparing the medicine to be held in the mouth, the text goes on to explain how to create the mandala that

---

[48] *T.* 20, 1080, 188b28-29.

[49] See *T.* 20, 1081, 196c1-3 (which is the only one of the four texts that employs the term 如意寶珠 rather than 摩尼珠 or 摩尼); *T.* 20, 1082, 197c4-5; and *T.* 20, 1083, 200b10-12.

[50] *T.* 20, 1080, 193a9-11.

corresponds to this rite, in which the practitioner is to create an image of Ruyilun facing west, make offerings of incense, flowers, and lamps, and then create a "*mani* banner" to be placed over the heart of the bodhisattva, with a *mani* gem at the top of the pole, which is then hung with banners and ribbons of varicolored silk. Seven pellets of the medicine are also to be tied to the top of the banner, and the spell then recited over them.[51] Interestingly, here the text gives instructions for what material to use for the *mani* gem: either red crystal or glass (Ch. *poli* 頗梨, J. *hari*, Sk. *sphaṭika*), or otherwise crystal (here the term is Ch. *shuijing* 水精, J. *suishō,* also translated in Sanskrit as *sphaṭika*) that is pure and without any kind of blemish. Such an ingredient would probably be fairly easy to get, and one can imagine that its magical properties, which perhaps here are merely symbolic, are granted by the ritual itself. In any event, here the jewel functions as a typical object of Buddhist "adornment." Thus even as it stands in this text as a metaphor for the inexhaustible power of the *dhāraṇī*, at the same time it retains its classical Indian "wishing-jewel" image as both an offering and the ultimate symbol of material wealth.

Since the *mani* jewel has a life of its own in this text, we might expect the same of the bodhisattva's "wheel," but this character appears in this work largely in the context of the name of the spell itself, "Ruyilun tuoluoni" 如意輪陀羅尼 (as well as in passing references to the "sun wheel" and "wind wheel" that have little bearing on our question). In the text's description of benefits the practitioner will gain from the medicine to be held in the mouth, however, we do find an interesting reference to a famous Buddhist *cakravartin* or "wheel-turning king": "Like the *cakravartin*

[51] Ibid., 194c8-17.

Mūṛdhagata (Ch. Wentuojie 曼馱多 or 文陀竭, J. Mandata), who compassionately nurtured all under heaven, [he will] attain the same throne as Indra."[52] Mūṛdhagata is a virtuous sovereign who appears in many Buddhist sutras and is sometimes considered to be a previous incarnation of Śākyamuni. According to legend, he ruled the continent of Jambudvīpa ("Rose Apple Island," that is, the human world) with justice and kindness, later came to rule over all four mythic continents, and eventually ascended to rule in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods (Sk.Trāyastriṃśa) on top of Mt. Sumeru beside the god Indra, who is said to preside over this heaven. Later he wanted to drive Indra out of the heaven and rule it by himself, but as a result of this hubris he fell back to Jambudvīpa, where he passed away unsatisfied by all that he had achieved. Mūṛdhagata is also called Mūrdhāta or Māndhātṛ, and is also known in Chinese as Dingsheng wang 頂生王 (J. Chosho ō) because he is said to have been born from the top of his father King Uposatha's head. Leaving aside the unhappy ending, our text thus promises that Ruyilun's devotee, like Mūṛdhagata, will achieve the status of a king who rules over heaven like a god.

When we turn to the question of whether the jewel and wheel appear as Ruyilun's attributes in these texts, however, we find that of the four variant translations of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, only Bodhiruci's gives the details of the Bodhisattva's iconography, and this work describes an image of a two-armed bodhisattva who holds no *cakra*, but rather an open lotus blossom with a *cintāmaṇi* resting on top of it. The first image of the deity that appears in this text offers few visual details, however—in giving instructions for how the devotee is to practice the recitation of Ruyilun's

[52] Ibid., 194c2-3.

dhāraṇī, it first says the practitioner should sit cross-legged in a clean room, facing east, and then:

> Think of the body of Master Perceiver (Ch. Guanzizai 觀自在, J. Kanjizai) endowed with the characteristics [of a buddha],[53] bright as the newly risen sun. He gives off a great light, and is seated on a lotus blossom.[54]

The practitioner is to face this image and recite the *dhāraṇī* without distraction, while also burning incense and making appropriate offerings; the *dhāraṇī* is to be recited "without ceasing" 1080 times during each of the six periods.

Only later in the text, in instructions for drawing a mandala in the form of a thirty-two petalled lotus with Ruyilun at its center, appears a more explicit description of how the bodhisattva is supposed to look:

> In the middle of the courtyard, draw a thirty-two petalled open lotus blossom.[55] Upon the flower platform, draw Wish-Fulfilling Wheel Holy Master Perceiver Bodhisattva, facing west, seated in lotus position. The face is shining and harmonious, and the body is a golden color. The head is crowned with a jeweled crown, and the crown has a transformation Buddha (Ch. *huafo* 化佛, J. *kebutsu*). The bodhisattva's left hand holds an open lotus blossom. Upon the calyx of the flower, draw a wish-fulfilling jewel (Ch. *ruyi baozhu* 如意寶珠, J. *nyoi hōju*).[56] The right hand forms the

[53] "Endowed with the characteristics of a buddha" (Ch. *xianghao* 相好, J. *sōgō*, Sk. *lakṣana-vyañjana*), lit. endowed with the thirty-two major characteristics of a buddha (相) and the eighty types of lesser characteristics of a buddha (好). The text makes no distinction in this sense between the form of a buddha and that of a bodhisattva, though the term here may also be meant in its more general sense, suggesting that the bodhisattva should be depicted as a "wondrous form."

[54] *T.* 20, 1080 189b14-15.

[55] *T.* 20, 1080, 193b24-c1.

[56] This term 如意寶珠 is used only one other time in this text, in the same passage: after the full description of the mandala, with Nyoirin surrounded by various attendant deities laid out in the form of a

gesture of preaching. [He is] clothed in heavenly garments, jewel earrings, rings, and bracelets. The seven-jewel necklace has many kinds of adornments. [His] body gives off many lights.

Here the text makes clear that the deity should face west, and that the bodhisattva's left hand holds a lotus blossom with a *cintāmaṇi* resting on top of it, while the right forms the *mudrā* of "preaching the dharma," or *vitarkamudrā*, that is, the right hand raised with thumb and index finger touching in an Indian gesture of argumentation or explanation. Though the jewel here rests on top of the lotus blossom, the wheel is not mentioned, but rather seems to be subsumed into this metaphoric object. Indeed, the bodhisattva's name, "Wish-Fulfilling Wheel," suggests the power of the *dhāraṇī* that can accomplish salvation through both the dharma itself (as in "turning the wheel") and through the inexhaustible wish-granting jewel.

The three other translations of this text do not mention Ruyilun's iconographic description, though they do equate the *dhāraṇī* with the *cintāmaṇi*; but it is worth noting here that one other text in our collection does implicitly suggest a two-armed form of Ruyilun in which the jewel appears as an iconographic attribute. This is the *Foshuo ruyilun lianhua xin rulai xiuxing guanmen yi,* translated during the Southern Song dynasty. Though this translation is quite late, it suggests that this iconographic form of Ruyilun persisted in China for several centuries after Bodhiruci's text appeared. In its description of a meditation on the Sanskrit letter *hūṃ*, the text says that the devotee should contemplate "Ruyilun Dalianhua Rulai" 如意輪大蓮華如来 (the "Wish-

thirty-two petalled lotus blossom, the text instructs the practitioner to draw around the mandala wish-fulfilling jewels "of many different colors," surrounded by blazing flames. Ibid., 193c.

Fulfilling Wheel Great Lotus Tathāgata"), whose face and form are golden-colored, the right hand "held up" and the left holding the "wish-fulfilling *mani* gem" (如意摩尼寶).[57]

We also find this *Tuoluoni jing* image faithfully reproduced in various medieval Japanese handbooks: it appears the *Kakuzen shō*, *Asabashō*, and *Besson zakki*, among others, but in the first two texts only in the context of the mandala itself. Intriguingly, all three of these texts also depict two additional two-armed forms of the bodhisattva that are not described in the Chinese texts: the *Kakuzen shō* cites the *Jinlun zhouwang jing* as the source of a two-armed Ruyilun that holds a lotus blossom in the left hand, upon which rests a group of three *cintāmaṇi* adorned with a flaming halo, while the right hand holds up another *cintāmaṇi* in front of the chest; this image also appears in the *Besson zakki*, as well as the *Asabashō*.[58] The other non-canonical two-armed form of Ruyilun that appears in all three texts is one we looked at earlier in the *Kakuzen shō*, associated with Ishiyamadera: the bodhisattva seated on a rock pedestal with the left hand open downward, making the wish-granting *mudrā*, the left foot hanging down, and the right hand in the *mudrā* of reassurance, palm held upright, open, facing outward.[59] It may be that the widespread belief, by the medieval period, in the "two-armed Ishiyamadera Nyoirin" influenced this latter representation of the bodhisattva in these works.

---

[57] *T.* 20, 1090, 223a19-b3.
[58] *DNBZ* 47, 185. See also *T.* Zuzō 3, 234, no. 60, and *T.* Zuzō 9, 3190, 188, no. 32.
[59] *DNBZ* 47, 193; *T.* Zuzō 3, 169, no. 61; *T.* Zuzō 9, 3190, 191, no. 34.

B. *A jewel, a wheel, and the six-armed Ruyilun*

In Bodhiruci's translation of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* and in its variant translations, then, we find a Ruyilun Guanyin who holds a jewel-upon-a-lotus that symbolizes the wondrous "wish-fulfilling wheel" *dhāraṇī*. The jewel and wheel attributes do appear as separate attributes, though, in another set of texts that also became extremely important in Japan, which describe and praise images not of the two-armed but of the six-armed Ruyilun. In fact, the two-armed and six-armed images of Ruyilun are the only iconographic representations of the bodhisattva found in these Tang Chinese texts; as I mentioned earlier, they offer no precedent for the four-armed, ten-armed, and other images depicted in the *Kakuzen shō* and similar Japanese works.[60]

As we have seen, it was the bodhisattva's six-armed form that became more popular than any other in Japan, as for example in the ninth-century image at Kanshinji, and indeed Japanese six-armed forms tend to follow the iconographic descriptions in these texts, with minor variations. In China too, the images of Ruyilun that we have correspond with these descriptions. At Dunhuang we find also six-armed Ruyilun Guanyin images dating to the ninth century. One of the most prominent examples of such a description appears in Ratnacinta's translation of the *Niansong fa*, a passage that explains the bodhisattva's six arms and their attributes. As in the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, these details are given in the text's instructions for how to draw the image:[61]

[60] The six texts that describe Nyoirin's six-armed form are the *Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni lun tuoluoni niansong fa*, *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui*, *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao*, *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue*, and *Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa*. *T.* 20, 1084; *T.* 20, 1085; *T.* 20, 1086; *T.* 20, 1087; *T.* 20, 1088; and *T.* 20, 1089, respectively.

[61] *T.* 20, 1084, 203b4-8.

> This bodhisattva's form is made in a posture of contemplation. He has six arms. Make the left upper the golden wheel hand. The middle hand holds a lotus blossom. The lower hand rests on the mountain [Potalaka]. Make the right hand in a gesture of contemplation [Ch. *siwei* 思惟, J. *shiyui*]. The middle hand holds the *cintāmaṇi* [Ch. *ruyizhū* 如意珠, J. *nyoiju*]. The lower hand holds a rosary. The right foot rests on the thirty-two-petalled lotus blossom. In the crown there is a transformation Buddha. The image shines like the rising moon. A majestic light shines like the light in the moon.

In this depiction, the bodhisattva holds a golden wheel in the upper left hand, and the *cintāmaṇi* in the middle right hand; the two attributes implied by the name "Ruyilun" are now visible.

The six-armed Ruyilun appears again in a visualization described near the end of the progression of eighteen *mudrā* in Amoghavajra's translation of the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui*, as a kind of culmination to its ritual program[62]:

> Next you must contemplate. Imagine within yourself, right in your own breast, a dazzlingly bright light in the form of a full moon. Upon the moon there is an eight-petalled lotus blossom. In the womb of the lotus blossom there is a *cintāmaṇi* [Ch. *ruyi baozhu* 如意寶珠, J. *nyoi hōju*]. It is a red somewhat like the color of a pear. [Its] abundant light limitlessly illuminates the world. Within the light that surges outward is the main deity, the Wish-Fulfilling Wheel Master Perceiver Bodhisattva complete in his six-armed form, shining and perfect, dwelling in a posture of contemplation. Visualize

[62] *T.* 20, 1085, 206a23-28.

this and it is complete. Arouse the mind of great compassion. Then form the Wish-Fulfilling Wheel fundamental *mudrā*.

This time the devotee is instructed to visualize rather than draw the image. The bodhisattva appears amidst a blaze of effulgent light, and though text does not give details about the six arms and their attributes, unlike our previous text it does mention the *cintāmaṇi* within one's own heart as the source of the light within which the bodhisattva appears. Here again the jewel is a red color, and its location in the breast, in the "womb of the lotus blossom," suggests that it may also refer to the heart energy center or *cakra*.

Not surprisingly, in Amoghavajra's translation of the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, the counterpart to the *Niansong yigui*, a similar image appears, again as part of instructions for contemplation, perhaps an elaboration on our previous, rather truncated description. Here however the attributes are given in detail.[63] First, the text emphasizes the *cintāmaṇi* attribute: "The hand holds the wish-fulfilling jewel / the six-armed body is a golden color," with the Buddha (Ch. Zizai wang 自在王, J. Jizaiō).[64] It then goes on to list each attribute, only this time with its respective compassionate function:

[63] *T.* 20, 1086, 208c21-209a1. This passage is echoed almost verbatim in Vajrabodhi's translation of the same text, the *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao, T.* 20, 1087, 213b17-26; and in the *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue*. On this particular passage the latter notes, "This comes out of the Vajra Peak Yoga Sutra explanation" (Jingang ding yuqie jing shuo 金剛頂瑜伽經説). *T.* 20, 1088, 217a19. We find similar references at the very beginning of both the *Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao*, which states, "I now follow the Yoga Vajra Peak Sutra" (*T.* 20, 1087, 211b24), and at the beginning of our text cited above, the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, which states, "I now follow the Yoga Vajra Peak Sutra explanation" (*T.* 20, 1086, 206c16). The *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue* also cites this text as the source of its description of the six arms and their attributes (*T.* 20, 1088, 217a2-19). The title may refer to a sutra that is now lost.

[64] In Chinese, lit. "Freedom King" or "Universal Sovereign," an epithet that can refer to either to a buddha or specifically to Mahāvairocana. Here the term is used in its more general sense.

> The first hand is in contemplation / because he has merciful thoughts toward sentient [beings]. / The second holds a thought-jewel [Ch. *yibao* 意寶, J. *ihō*] / that is able to fulfill all wishes. / The third holds a rosary / that measures the suffering of life. / The left rests on Potalaka [Ch. *guangmingshan* 光明山, J. *kōmyōsan*] / accomplishing inexhaustible movement. / The second hand that holds the lotus / can purify that which is false. / The third hand that holds up a wheel / is able to transmit the highest dharma. The body with six broadly extending arms / is able to move freely through the six paths.

As we can see, the iconography of the six arms is identical to that described in our previous text, though they are given in a different order, with the right hands described first, and then the left. One other detail here is striking, and not found in our previous examples: the six arms are said to correspond with the "six paths" of existence. In the Buddhist concept of transmigration, these six paths are heaven (Ch. *tian* 天, J. *ten*), fighting gods (Ch. *axiuluo*, J. *asura* 阿修羅), human (Ch. *renjian*, J. *ningen* 人間), hungry ghosts (Ch. *egui*, J. *gaki* 餓鬼), animals (Ch. *chusheng*, J. *chikushō* 畜生), and hell (Ch. *diyu*, J. *jigoku* 地獄).[65] (The text does not specify which arms correlate with which paths.) Later we will see this notion echoed in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, along with a similar belief that that the bodhisattva's six arms symbolize the esoteric "six Kannon," and thus that her six-armed form embodies the work of all six deities.

Interestingly, the *Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa* presents the matter in a slightly different light, again in giving instructions to the practitioner for contemplation of Ruyilun's image. Here we are told:

[65] A similar notion exists for Dizang, in which the "six Dizang" transform themselves to save sentient beings in the six paths of existence.

"Contemplate the six arms in the way they are all explained / Also envision white light emanating from between the eyebrows / slowly spreading throughout the world / For sentient beings, all misfortune / will completely cease, disappear, no longer exist."[66] Here the practitioner is to envision the bodhisattva's six arms, as well as the white light emitted from between the bodhisattva's eyebrows, a classic Mahāyāna image of the buddha or bodhisattva projecting enlightenment into the world, all of which brings a true end to human misfortune.

Finally, it is also worth noting that in the *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue*, which echoes in similar terms the description of Ruyilun's six arms and attributes in the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, we also find an explanation of both "jewel" and "wheel" as separate attributes.[67] Earlier in the text, in a parenthetical interpretation of the name "Cakravarti-cintāmaṇi," given in Siddham characters, it says that "cakravarti" is "the wheel that is able to transmit the highest dharma" and also means "breaking and destroying"; while "cintāmaṇi" means "contemplation" and also "the jewel of the Tathāgata," and there are six types of jewel able to fulfill sentient beings' wishes.[68] Indeed, breaking and destroying was the original function of the *cakra* in India, as a weapon that gods came to possess, and this explanation suggests a creative as well as destructive power—preaching of the dharma out of compassion to save sentient beings, while also destroying defilements, illusions, and demonic obstacles.

This text also refers repeatedly to the "jewel-wheel," rather than to a *cintāmaṇi* by itself. For example, when Ruyilun expounds the rite, he says, "I take the jewel-wheel

---

[66] *T.* 20, 1089, 219a19-21.
[67] *T.* 20, 1088, 217a2-11.
[68] *T.* 20, 1088, 216b10-14. What "six types of jewel" refers to is not clear.

and use it to open enlightenment."[69] In fact, in this part of the sutra, which lists the benefits of the rite for suffering sentient beings, Ruyilun makes several such references to the powers of the "wish-fulfilling jewel wheel," as well as to the "wish-fulfilling holy wheel." In this ritual the wheel itself plays an important role, as Śākyamuni gives instructions for creating a wheel-shaped "fire altar" with an image of Ruyilun at its center and the deities of the seven stars of the Northern Dipper surrounding him.[70] The text offers no specific iconographic description of the deity, but the *Besson zakki* depicts Nyoirin with six arms and twelve arms in its two separate visual versions of this altar, though it gives no source to justify its choice of these forms.[71] In any case, given that the rite described in this text is meant to help a king defeat a marauding army, it may be that the various symbols of the *cakra* as weapon, *cakra* or "wheel of dharma" of the *cakravartin*, and the wish-fulfilling jewel converge in this image of the jewel-wheel.

Visits to the devotee

Until now we have looked at some basic iconographic variations in Ruyilun's physical descriptions in these texts. In our search for a "picture" of the bodhisattva and his character that emerges here, it would also be helpful to know whom he promises to save, and from what. In the last part of this chapter we will consider the nature of

---

[69] *T.* 20, 1091, 225a4.

[70] Ibid. The actual name of the altar is the "Secret Gateway of the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel Wheel *Pratāra* Practice Hall Seven-Star Fire Altar" (Ch. *Ruyilun banduoluo daochang qixing huotan mimi zhi men* 如意輪般多羅道場七星火壇祕密之門, J. *Nyoirin hattara dōjō shichishō kadan himitsu shi mon*). *Pratāra* literally means "bowl" in Sanskrit and here refers to the area of pure ground upon which the altar is to be created.

[71] *T.* Zuzō 3, 174-5, Figs. 66 and 67. Neither the *Kakuzen shō* nor the *Asabashō* provide illustrations of this altar.

Ruyilun Guanyin's devotees, and of his promised manifestations of his form for them. Of course these texts offer an idealized vision of the bodhisattva, and cannot be taken as an accurate reflection of what was actually practiced in India or China. Still, as in the Japanese cases we have looked at until now, their rhetoric of salvation may shed further light on the nature of the bodhisattva's later transformations in Japan.

In considering the question of whether the rituals and benefits described in these texts are restricted to monks or meant to be practiced by any devotee, we might recall our passage in the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing* that specifies the number of recitations of the *dhāraṇī* appropriate for devotees of various social ranks. These instructions imply a Brahmanic orientation, but also make clear that at least the recitation of the *dhāraṇī* itself was, at least ideally, open to men and women, lay or monastic, of all ages and social levels. The same sutra reinforces this idea elsewhere, as when it says that one should recite the *dhāraṇī* "in all places, whether one eats or abstains, whether pure or impure."[72] Other texts in our group of twelve seem to support this idea, though at least one suggests that its rituals were meant specifically for monks.

On this point, Ratnacinta's translation of our *dhāraṇī* sutra is even more explicit than Bodhiruci's in its liberal approach[73]:

> World-Honored One, if there is a good son or daughter, a monk or nun, who wants the benefits he seeks to be manifested before his eyes, [he has only to] wish and at once they will be obtained. This wish-fulfilling spell and *mudrā* should be practiced diligently. It is not necessary to perform rituals, nor to

[72] *T.* 20, 1080, 190a1-2. It is not clear whether "pure or impure" here refers to the person or the place.
[73] *T.* 20, 1083, 200c12-16.

> seek an auspicious day. It is not necessary to have a vegetarian diet, it is not necessary to bathe, it is not necessary to [wear] special clothes. When you receive and remember it, it is not necessary to labor or suffer. Only pronounce it and all will at once be accomplished. [Its] recitation causes things to flourish. It can make the 100,000 different kinds of things flourish.

According to this version, a layman or lay woman, monk or nun, can practice the spell and it will be effective merely through recitation, without any special preparation or purification necessary. The *Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni lun tuoluoni niansong fa*, also translated by Ratnacinta, takes a similar approach, saying that if a son or daughter of good family recites the spell every day, after this is done 100,000 times the bodhisattva will appear in person before her and grant all her wishes[74]:

> Ordinary people recite this spell, including lay or monastic, those who drink alcohol, eat meat, have a wife and children. Only recite this spell and certainly it will accomplish [everything]. Those who recite this spell do not have to perform rituals, or seek an auspicious day, or seek to maintain a vegetarian diet, or [wear] special clothing. Only recite it and all will be completely accomplished, just as the sutras expound in detail.

Here we find an explicit statement that it makes no difference whether one is a layperson or a monk or nun, whether one eats meat, has a wife and children, and so forth. The rhetoric, at least, promises universal access to this practice of reciting the spell. Similarly, in the *Qixing ruyilun bimiyao jing*, instructions for performing the rite

[74] *T.* 20, 1084, 202b23-26.

are given to a sovereign, not a monk: the sovereign himself is authorized to perform the ritual for protection of his people.

The one notable exception to the "worldly" inclination of these texts is a passage mentioned earlier from our Jūhachidō text, the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui*, which suggests at least implicitly that one should live like a monk in order to perform the rite properly[75]:

> Seek to quickly get out of the great sea of birth and death. [You] should first enter into the Buddha ocean assembly *abhiṣeka* practice hall.[76] Receive *abhiṣeka*. Arouse a joyful mind. Dedicate oneself to a teacher, lovingly receive, think of and recite the rules [Ch. *faze* 法則, J. *hōsoku*]. Then, in a clean room, in a mountain forest with flowing water, at a most excellent [spot], build a practice hall and enshrine the main deity. Practice the mantra facing east.

Here we are told that one should retire to a scenic natural place, receive esoteric initiation, and dedicate oneself to a teacher, all of which suggests the life of a monk or nun. These instructions call to mind the image of the Japanese monk Shōbō on Mt. Kasatori, building a hall for Nyoirin, or the legendary nun Nyoi from the *Genkō shakusho*, performing rites to Nyoirin deep in the mountains.

Most of our examples from these texts, however, indicate that Ruyilun's spell is meant to be broadly accessible to men and women at all levels of society, a point that

---

[75] *T.* 20, 1085, 203c14-18.

[76] The "ocean assembly" (Ch. *haihui* 海會, J. *kaie*) is a generic Buddhist term that refers to a great multitude of holy beings such as buddhas and bodhisattvas. *Abhiṣeka* (Ch. *Guanding* 灌頂, J. *kanjō*) is the Tantric Buddhist ritual of initiation, derived from the enthronement rite for an Indian sovereign involving the pouring of water taken from the four oceans upon his head. In Tantric Buddhism water symbolizing the five types of wisdom of the Tathāgata is poured onto the head of the practitioner, marking his succession to the position of Buddha.

was not necessarily borne out in practice in Japan. Much of the worship of Nyoirin in Japan was conducted by Shingon or Tendai monks, ritual specialists (often with supernatural talents) who performed rites on behalf of the sovereign and nation, as well as for aristocratic patrons. Lay and female devotees found an increasing affinity with Nyoirin, but they usually did not perform esoteric rituals themselves. Of course, it is possible that monks may also have been the main practitioners of rites dedicated to this bodhisattva in Tang China and India, that the rhetoric of the texts reflects a popular ideal that was rarely or never reflected in actual practice. The study of documents that may tell us something about the practice of these rites in those cultures is beyond the scope of the present study, but remains an intriguing area of research for the future.

Dreams and visions

As we have seen, for many Japanese devotees, whether lay or monastic, this bodhisatta's physical presence was important, and like most other varieties of Avalokiteśvara, she was known for appearing to them in dreams and visions. In these Chinese sutras, at first glance the corporeal presence of the bodhisattva appears to be less important; the bodhisattva's main role here is rather as granter of his miraculous spell to sentient beings, and the spell works the real miracles. In fact, however, in addition to the rather abstract iconographic descriptions we looked at above, we find several examples of the deity promising to appear in dreams, or vividly manifesting himself through visualizations, in a way that may have set the stage for later Japanese visions of Nyoirin. While we should probably not make too much of such references,

since they often represent formulaic Tantric visualizations, it is still worth looking at the ways in which the bodhisattva's physical presence is manifested in these texts.

When we return to the opening tableau of the *Ruyilun tuoluoni jing*, in which Avalokiteśvara presents his wondrous spell to Śākyamuni and the multitudes of disciples and bodhisattvas, the bodhisattva is not described in this scene in any detail, just as Śākyamuni and his disciples are not. Instead he is "seen" through his actions: he rises from his seat, arranges his clothing, kneels and presses his hands together in veneration before Śākyamuni, brings up the matter of the *dhāraṇī* and is praised by Śākyamuni, rises to his feet, bows to the Buddha, circles him three times and returns to his seat.[77] As we have seen, it is only later, in instructions to the practitioner about how to visualize and draw his image, that a clearer picture of Ruyilun's physical form emerges.

Indeed, as in most Tantric ritual texts, these more often emphasize the proper forms the practitioner's body is to take, with their elaborate descriptions of *mudrā* to be made and *dhāraṇī* recited, than they speak of the bohisattva's physical form. Particularly in the case of the *dhāraṇī* sutra variants, they also wax eloquent on the many different kinds of illness that Ruyilun's *dhāraṇī* can cure, thus forming a picture of the diseased and suffering human body that is more vivid than any description of the deity. At the same time, in the texts that have a more "Buddhist" ritual orientation, such as the *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue* and the *Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa*, we encounter descriptions of various practices that bless and elevate the practitioner's physical body to a level at which it can

---

[77] *T*. 20, 1080, 188b22-c6.

serve as the "vehicle" for communion with the deity. For example, the *Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue* contains a Tantric ritual sequence in which the practitioner is to visualize the Siddham characters of the mantra on various parts of the body.[78] And in the *Dubiao,* in a similar type of practice, the devotee is instructed to place a certain *mudrā* at various points on the body, thus consecrating it.[79] Throughout the *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie*, we also find the physical instructions to the devotee intermingled with rhetorical images of virtue and enlightenment, an interpenetration of the spiritual imagery of radiant light and magical gems with the physicality of the body. The practitioner enters into a kind of wondrous visualization in which he plays the central role.

Nevertheless, the devotee naturally longs not only for this kind of metaphysical union, but to be rewarded with an actual vision or experience of the deity's presence, and the texts also promise such encounters. The *Tuoluoni jing*, after giving basic insructions for performing the rite for reciting the *dhāraṇī*, offers a long list of benefits that will ensue, which includes among others "wonderful dreams," and further states that eventually Ruyilun himself will appear to the devotee in a dream. "Recite this *dhāraṇī* 1080 times and Master Perceiver will appear in person in his waking dream. Dwelling before this person he will say, Good son, do not be afraid. Whatever you wish will be granted to you. Or you will see Amitābha Buddha, or you will see the Pure Land."[80] This sutra concludes with Śākyamuni saying "See and believe that your body is mine, therefore rejoice," a stark statement that suggests the ultimate reward to the

[78] *T.* 20, 1088, 216a11-17.
[79] *T.* 20, 1089, 217c13-16.
[80] *T.* 20, 1080, 189c9-12.

devotee for his efforts: buddhahood.[81] The Buddha will not only appear to you—you will become a buddha yourself.

Thus one way the practitioner can make "contact" with the deity in these rituals is through the bodhisattva appearing to him in the flesh, as a result of his reciting the spell; but another way to experience Ruyilun's presence, as in all Tantric ritual, is through meditative visualization of the bodhisattva. One of the most striking examples of this "experience" occurs, again, in the *Niansong yigui*, which provides the ritual sequence for the Jūhachidō in Japan. In the midst of its description of the series of *mudrā* and mantras to be performed, the devotee is asked to envision an eight-petalled lotus blossom on the altar, upon which is a wonderful Buddha throne, upon which sits a jeweled pedestal decorated with silk pendants. Flowers rain down, music plays, jeweled vessels contain food and drink, and "the *maṇi* jewel is a lamp."[82] This passage reflects typical Mahāyāna and esoteric imagery, as the practitioner "manifests" the deity through his visualization. In the sequence that follows, which we looked at earlier, Ruyilun appears in a cloud of blazing light emanating from the red-colored *cintāmaṇi* in the devotee's own heart.[83] In contrast to the dream visits that Ruyilun promises in the *Tuoluoni jing*, these encounters are willed by the devotee, though the ultimate effect is similarly miraculous. Here we are dealing with phenomena that pervade the Tantric tradition, but for our purposes the most important element is that the precedent for Ruyilun "appearing" to the practitioner in a tangible, embodied form can be found in these texts. As we have seen, here the bodhisattva is androgynous or male, while in

---

[81] *T.* 20, 1080, 196b4-5.
[82] *T.* 20, 1085, 205a7-10.
[83] *T.* 20, 1085, 206a23-28.

Japan Nyoirin's physical form was often perceived as female, at times even offering her own body as the ultimate means to salvation.

Also, again probably due to the genre of these Chinese texts, the deity's physical presence is not confined to a particular place. The devotee is instructed only to perform recitation rites in a "clean room" or a quiet place in the forest, or to build a particular altar, as in the case of the "fire wheel" and *homa* rites, wherever an appropriate space is available. In our Japanese texts, partly because they belong to different genres—ritual-iconographic manuals, or miraculous tales associated with a particular place—we are much more likely to find descriptions of Nyoirin dwelling at a certain temple, or on a certain mountain. For Japanese devotees, beginning with Shōbō, the place where one encounters Nyoirin becomes a holy place as a result. Yet the possibility offered in these Chinese texts involves "meeting" the bodhisattva merely by reciting his spell and performing his rites. In that act the union between Ruyilun and devotee is manifested, and it often involves the bodhisattva "inhabiting" the consecrated body of the practitioner—invited, and expressed, in the ritual actions described—rather than Ruyilun coming to visit him in a dream. By contrast, in Japan we find not only more emphasis on the tangible (and often female) presence of Nyoirin, but also that she engages with devotees in a much more "local" way: she merges with local deities and takes up residence on mountaintops and islands, in caves and temples, and thus a different kind of "presence" is born, not only corporeal but also unique, in each case, to the places themselves.

Conclusion

In this brief exploration we have taken Ruyilun Guanyin's "canonical" texts as a case study in the presentation of a Tantric deity—not in the ritual details, but in the idealized rhetoric of the bodhisattva's character as it emerges in these Chinese translations. In some sense we have encountered a set of values and desires projected onto the screen of the name "Ruyilun Guanyin," which no doubt also reflects a long process of incorporating elements from other cults, including that of Śiva, whose analysis is beyond the scope of this study. Still, Ruyilun is none other than what he commands, expects, and bestows in return, and in that sense these texts offer a fascinating glimpse of what people wanted and feared around the time these works were composed. Ruyilun promises power, abundance, riddance of demons, and healing from illness both spiritual and physical, all to be achieved through the beguilingly easy ritual methods described.

The "Wish-fulfilling Wheel" bodhisattva who emerges here is a cosmic Tantric bodhisattva with connections to the Buddha Amitābha and the Pure Land, offering an astounding array of worldly and spiritual benefits, which nevertheless are presented within a larger Buddhist tableau of compassion and salvation. Though the *cintāmaṇi* appears as a physical object, as one of the bodhisattva's attributes or as an element in his visualizations, it also functions as a metaphor for the power of his spell. Clearly, there is nothing inherently feminine about the *cintāmaṇi* here, or in Ruyilun himself. In Japan the *cintāmaṇi* converged with relics and the jewels of other deities, which drew Nyoirin into a new web of associations in which she often took female forms. In

Shingon the jewel, like Nyoirin herself, not only became embedded in local traditions, but also took on a physical presence. It is almost as though in Japan this bodhisattva stepped out of the carefully ordered, doctrinally dictated world of Tantric ritual, directly into devotees' daily lives and dreams, to grant their most deeply held wishes not from above, or merely through a spell, but in person. She entered the ordinary world, and enchanted the places where she dwelled.

PART III. FOX-DRAGONS AND FIRE-JEWELS: THE "HOLY WOMAN" NYOIRIN

In the fall of 2006 I attended an exhibit at the Otsu Historical Museum in the city of Otsu, near Kyoto, that displayed a large collection of "Sannō mandalas," many of which had never been shown in public before. These mandalas reflect a system of thought known as Sannō Shintō that flourished in medieval Japan on Mt. Hiei, which is directly adjacent to Otsu.[1] Many of these mandalas depict an imagined view from above of the mountain's eastern slope, where the Hie shrine complex overlooks Lake Biwa, as a lush natural landscape populated with deities who appear sometimes as indigenous Japanese *kami,* as buddhas and bodhisattvas, or as both simultaneously, side by side.[2] In light of our interest in the "feminization" of Nyoirin Kannon in this study, of the twenty-one pairs of figures that appear in these mandalas, one in particular drew my attention: that of Nyoirin Kannon and the Japanese *kami* Inari, who appears here in a female form called Seijo Gongen 聖女権現, the "Holy Woman avatar." How did these two come to be an interchangeable, inseparable pair in the Sannō tradition? Inari is an indigenous Japanese deity of agriculture and wealth who is often depicted holding a wish-fulfilling jewel, and as we explore the meaning of this and other related associations with Nyoirin in the Tendai esotericism, we will find that the jewel again serves as an iconographical

---

[1] Also known as Ichijitsu Shintō 一実神道, or Hie Shintō 日吉神道.

[2] See the extensive catalogue of Sannō mandalas from this exhibition, Otsu shi rekishi hakubutsukan 大津市歴史博物館, ed., *Tendai o mamoru kamigami—Sannō mandara no shosō* 天台を守る神々—山王曼荼羅の諸相 (Otsu: Otsu shi rekishi hakubutsukan, 2006).

link, only perhaps here more self-consciously, as though the process has shifted from the vagaries of "metonymic drift" to the flowering of a willed creative act, a trend that reflects more widespread religious developments from the fourteenth century onward.

Taking the mandala images of Nyoirin and the "Holy Woman" as a starting point, for their interpretation we will turn to a text that is central to the Tendai esoteric tradition, the fourteenth-century compilation of esoteric lore called the *Keiran shūyōshū*, compiled by the monk Kōshū 光宗 (1276-1350).[3] As we will see, the themes that emerged in the Ono tradition that we examined in the earlier part of this dissertation here resurface here again in different forms. In Taimitsu, Nyoirin and her *cintāmaṇi* serve as a pivot linking Mt. Hiei and Enryakuji 延暦寺, headquarters of Tendai Buddhism, with the central places and motifs associated with imperial power in Japan. Partly echoing long-held beliefs, and partly through innovative word and image associations, the "chroniclers" (J. *kike* 記家) whose activities on Mt. Hiei the *Keiran shūyōshū* reflects created new roles and networks of association that bestowed this tradition with a political power that at the time they likely felt, with the decline of their imperial and aristocratic patrons and the rise of the Kamakura *bakufu,* was slipping away. Here we find that through a play of symbolic and word associations linking Nyoirin's "jewel" to the "jewel" of the imperial regalia, the way was opened for her to take on several new identities that both conferred power on the monastic tradition of Mt.

[3] Also pronounced Kōjū or Kōsō.

Hiei and at the same time further developed her feminine, paradoxically wish-granting and desire-inspiring, nature in Japan.[4]

Unlike the Indian mandalas brought to Japan with esoteric Buddhism from the eighth century onward, which reflect a cosmic and abstract order in their depiction of deities laid out in elaborate grids, Shintō mandalas tend to emphasize the topography of particular shrine sites, and to show the immanence of both buddhas and *kami* in those particular places. Though *kami* have been depicted in human form in Japan since the ninth century, this type of combinatory mandala became widespread only in the thirteenth century.[5] Their mandalas often visually depict the system of thought, so pervasive in medieval Japanese religiosity, known as the "matching of gods and

---

[4] From the fourteenth century onward Nyoirin and her jewel also figured prominently in two Ryōbu Shintō 両部神道 traditions, those of Mt. Miwa 三輪 and Mt. Murō, that produced a flowering of esoteric knowledge about relics no less self-consciously creative than that of Sannō Shintō.

A very brief overview of these two traditions can be found in Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡, "The Medieval Period: The Kami Merge with Buddhism," in *Shinto—A Short History,* by Inoue Nobutaka 井上順孝 (ed.), Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun 遠藤潤 and Mori Mizue 森瑞枝, translated and adapted by Mark Teeuwen and John Breen (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 90-92.

On Mt. Miwa ritual practices, and Nyoirin's various associations in this tradition, see for example the *Miwaryū Shintō chō hoshinshō* 三輪流神道汀補眞鈔, in *ST*, *Shingon Shintō* 真言神道 2, 127-49. Though the text bears a colophon dating to the Edo period, it likely reflects earlier traditions. For a contemporary overview of Mt. Miwa faith, see Tokyo Miwa ikazuchi 東京三輪いかづち, ed., *Shingō Miwayama: Kamigami no higō o hiraku* 神郷三輪山—神々の秘郷をひらく [English title: *Divine Mountain Miwayama*], (Tokyo: Dōyūkan, 1990).

For an extensive body of research on the *cintāmaṇi* discourse and ritual traditions at Mt. Murō, see Fujimaki Kazuhiro 藤巻和宏, "Ben'ichizan nyoi hōju-hō o meguru Tōmitsu-kei kuden no tenkai: Sanbōin-ryū sanzon gōgyōhō o chūshin to shite" 宀一山と如意宝珠法をめぐる東密系口伝の展開—三宝院流三尊合行法を中心として, *Muromachi* 室町 5 (2001): 1-15; Fujimaki Kazuhiro, "Nyoi hōju o meguru Tōmitsu-kei kuden no tenkai to Ben'ichi-san engirui no shōsei: "'Ben'ichisan himitsuki' o chūshin toshite" 如意宝珠をめぐる東密系口伝の展開と宀一山縁起類の生成—『宀一山秘密記』を中心として, *Kokugo kokubun* 国語国文 71, no. 1 [809] (2002): 1-17; and Fujimaki Kazuhiro, "Hasedera engi no keisei to tenkai" 長谷寺縁起の形成の展開 (Ph.D. diss., Waseda University, 2002). For an art historical perspective on Mt. Murō, see Sherry D. Fowler, *Murōji: Rearranging Art and History at a Japanese Buddhist Temple* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

[5] For a compelling study of two other major traditions that produced these mandalas, see Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis, "The Kami-Worshiping Tradition: Kasuga" and "The Kami-Worshiping Tradition: Kumano," in *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 142-84.

buddhas" (J. *shinbutsu shūgō*) or "original ground and manifest traces" (J. *honji suijaku*). This system evolved within Buddhist circles beginning in the ninth and tenth centuries as a way to bring Japanese *kami* into the Buddhist fold, to turn them into protectors of Buddhism and eliminate any potential dissonance between the two systems. It also opened the way to an endless play of esoteric knowledge in the form of equations of one deity with another, allowing both sides to endlessly transform themselves according to the needs of particular groups of people or circumstances. *Kami* were identified as local manifestations of cosmic buddhas and bodhisattvas; and Buddhist temples were often built near shrines, or near the sites of pre-Buddhist indigenous cults, and their *kami* made the protectors of the adjacent temple.[6]

Mt. Hiei, 848 meters high, looms over both Lake Biwa and Kyoto, and is home to Enryakuji, headquarters of Tendai Buddhism, as well as to the Hie Shrine complex on its eastern slope, overlooking the lake. In medieval Japan this enormous temple-shrine complex reached the apex of its power, exerting tremendous political as well as religious influence. At that time the imperial court, aristocratic and warrior and clans, and religious establishment (Buddhist temples) cooperated in a complex system of power-sharing (J. *kenmon taisei* 權門体制) in which Mt. Hiei acted as one of the major players. The Sannō shrine, or Hie shrine, is actually a cluster of twenty-one individual

---

[6] On the expression of *honji suijaku* thought in the Sannō tradition, see Kuroda Toshio 黒田俊雄, "Historical Consciousness and *Hon-jaku* Philosophy in the Medieval Period on Mount Hiei," trans. Allan G. Grapard, in *The Lotus Sutra and Japanese Culture,* ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. and Willa Jane Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 143-58.

In fact, on Mt. Hiei by the fourteenth century a distinct tradition had emerged in which Sannō Shintō was believed to have existed prior to Buddhism and Buddhism was seen as an offshoot of it, called Yoshida 吉田 or Yuiitsu 唯一 Shintō. Sannō Shintō itself later came to serve as the system within which the Tokugawa shoguns were deified. See Allan G. Grapard, "*Keiranshūyōshū*: A Different Perspective on Mt. Hiei in the Medieval Period," in Richard K. Payne, ed., *Revisioning "Kamakura" Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 63-64 and 67-68.

shrines whose deities were enlisted to serve as protectors of the temple. The mandalas sometimes feature the "original" Buddhist forms of these deities, and while other times they depict the *kami* believed to be their manifestations. In fact the founder of Tendai Buddhism in Japan, Saichō, is believed to have selected this mountain upon which to found his temple partly because by the ninth century powerful indigenous *kami* were already believed to dwell there.

These first *kami* were probably local agrarian deities. The earliest four shrines on the mountain, later called as a group the "Eastern Shrine," were dedicated to two *kami*, Oyamagui-no-mikoto 大山咋神 and Kamo-tamayori-hime-no-mikoto 賀茂玉依媛命. According to some accounts the *kami* worshipped on the mountain was named Yamasue-no-mikoto 山末神, an agricultural deity that may represent a combination of the male and female aspects of Oyamagui and Kamo-tamayori.[7] Later, in 715, Fujiwara no Muchimaro 藤原武智麻呂 (680-737) established a second shrine there, which in fact may be the same as the one known as the "Western Shrine," Ōmiya 大宮, that enshrined the *kami* Ōnamuchi-no-mikoto 大己貴命 and was brought to Otsu when the capital was moved there in 667 by the sovereign Tenji 天智 (626-671, r. 668-671) and his aide, Muchimaro's grandfather, Nakatomi no Kamatari 中臣鎌足 (or Fujiwara no Kamatari 藤原鎌足, 614-669).[8] Allan G. Grapard has suggested that this second shrine was established by an ancestor of the Fujiwara clan that rose to dominate court life during the Heian period, and it introduced for the first time, in addition to the local roots of the "Eastern Shrine," an elite *kami* enshrined at the "Western Shrine," and thus made

[7] See Allan G. Grapard, "Linguistic Cubism—A Singularity of Pluralism in the Sannō Cult," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14, nos. 2-3 (1987): 213.
[8] Ibid., 213-14.

the whole group of shrines far more eligible for imperial patronage, which it was granted in 1027.[9]

Tendai Buddhism takes as its core text the Lotus Sutra (Ch. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, J. *Myōhōrengekyō*, Sk. *Saddharma puṇḍarīka sūtra*), which has long been revered as one of the most important Mahāyāna Buddhist texts throughout East Asia. Tiantai thought is largely based on the philosophical teachings of the Chinese master Zhiyi 智顗 (J. Chigi, 538-597), the founder of the sect, who lived and taught on Mt. Tiantai in southeastern China, and in Japanese Tendai the name Sannō, which means "Mountain King," refers not only to the highest protector god of Mt. Hiei, but also to the protector god of Mt. Tiantai, thus in a sense bringing Mt. Tiantai itself to Mt. Hiei. As we will see, this act of consciously linking place to place was extremely important in the Sannō style of *kami*-buddha matching thought.

Given that the first *kami* enshrined on this mountain were probably agricultural deities, it is not surprising that the grain or rice deity Inari should later find a place in its pantheon. An indigenous agricultural deity worshipped since the eighth century if not earlier in Japan, Inari takes many forms, including those of a a young woman or an old man carrying rice, and by the ninth century this deity had come to be seen as a protector of Buddhist teachings, particularly in the esoteric traditions.[10] Inari is also strongly

---

[9] Ibid., 214.

[10] The image of Inari in the form of an old man, today the most common "Shintō" representation of Inari, is based on a Buddhist story in which, according to one version, Kūkai and Inari meet in a past life in India, both listening to a sermon given by Śākyamuni. Kūkai vows to be born in an "eastern land" and to spread Buddhism there, and he predicts that Inari will become the protective deity of the secret teachings; they meet again in Japan in 816, when Kūkai encounters a very tall, muscular old man; later, in 823, this old man arrives at Tōji carrying rice over his shoulder and a cedar branch in one hand, accompanied by two women and two children, and on this occasion Kūkai welcomes him and Inari duly becomes the protective deity of esoteric Buddhism. See Karen A. Smyers, *The Fox and the Jewel: Shared and Private Meanings in Contemporary Japanese Inari Worship* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 17.

associated with foxes, which serve as her messengers or avatars, and there are various theories about the reasons for this. According to the anthropologist Karen A. Smyers, Japanese folklore scholars connect Inari to the deity of rice fields, or *ta no kami* 田の神. Foxes may have come to be seen as the messengers of this deity, because foxes have often appeared on the day in the second lunar month when the mountain deity was believed to descend into the fields; or because foxes were often often spotted in the vicinity of rice fields, since they hunted the rodents that ate the rice, and thus came to be seen as protectors of the fields.[11] According to the folklorist Yanagita Kunio's 柳田國男 theory, foxes were associated with natural or artificial mounds where *ta no kami* were worshipped, so-called "fox mounds" (J. *kitsune-zuka* 狐塚), which in many cases turned out to be ancient *kofun* 古墳 burial chambers and thus were associated with ancestral mountain *kami*, the field deities' winter form.[12] One popular explanation holds that Inari came to be identified with the fox through wordplay: the name "Miketsu no kami" 御食神 ("honorable food deity") sounds much like *ketsune*, which is a variant

---

Inari's manifestation in the form of a young, often aristocratic woman could be linked to the term *myōbu* 命婦, which refers to a rank of court lady, as well as to Inari's fox attendants and the sub-shrines that house them. This may have to do with the rank of *myōbu* having been bestowed upon Inari, in one case by the sovereign Gosanjō 後三条 (1034-1073, r. 1068-1072) in 1071, another time by a noblewoman by the name of Shin no Myōbu 進命婦 during the reign of the sovereign Ichijō 一条 (980-1011, r. 986-1011). Her female form may also be connected with her having merged in Japan with the Indian demoness-turned-Buddhist-protector Dakiniten. Ibid., 81-85.

Smyers also draws attention to the the Japanese scholar Higo Kazuo's 肥後和男 theory that the fox may have been chosen as the messenger of esoteric Buddhism in direct opposition to the *kami* who take the form of monkeys to serve as sacred messengers in the Tendai tradition on Mt. Hiei, its main rival. If this was the case, then perhaps the presence of Inari in the Hie shrine complex represents a reappropriation of this Shingon guardian deity to make use of its divine power. Ibid., 80-81.

For a detailed overview of the history and practice of Inari worship in Japan, see also *Inari shinkō jiten* 稲荷信仰辞典, ed. Yamaori Tetsuo 山折哲雄 (Tokyo: Ebisu kōshō shuppan, 1999). On the bewitching character of fox deities in China, see Xiaofei Kang, *The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[11] Ibid., 75-6. Smyers also notes that the color of foxes is close to that of ripe rice, and that the shape of their tails resembles a sheaf of rice, which may also have contributed to this association.

[12] Ibid.

pronunciation of *kitsune* 狐, or fox.[13] At the same time, at least by the medieval period if not earlier, foxes were also recognized in Japan as trickster figures, shape-shifters that got into all kinds of mischief, who could also possess a person and cause madness.[14] Medieval Japan abounds with stories of foxes who—like snake deities—took the form of beautiful women to bewitch hapless men.

In the Sannō tradition, Inari appears in the form of the beautiful female deity called Seijo, an association that appears to date to the tenth century, when she is said to have appeared in this form in a dream to the illustrious monk Sonni 尊意 (866-940) in 926, the same year he was appointed thirteenth abbot (J. *zasu* 座主) of Enryakuji, and thus head of the Tendai sect.[15] Sonni was famed as an accomplished practitioner of Tendai esoteric ritual, having conducted effective rites for rain, healing illness, and safe childbirth, among others. Several texts dating to the fourteenth century onward attest to Inari appearing in her female "Holy Woman" form to Sonni in 926, but we can assume that this story was probably already circulating at an earlier date.[16] Though for historical purposes it is not much help to us, one very late text, the *Zōsōjō sonni hosshō sonja ryakufu* 贈僧正尊意法性尊者略譜, a historical accont of Sonni's life recorded by Shū'in 秀胤 (19th century) of Mt. Hiei around 1835-37, offers a detailed account of the dream, in which Inari appears in a beautifully adorned carriage to Sonni; when he tells here she is not allowed on the mountain, since it is off limits to women, she says, "I am no ordinary woman, I am the Holy Woman," and goes on to explain that she has come to

---

[13] Ibid., 78.

[14] Ibid., 76-77.

[15] Sonni received the bodhisattva precepts from Ennin (794-864).

[16] See, for example, *Hie Sannō hidenki* 日吉山王祕傳記, *ZTZ Shintō* 神道 1, 219b; *Sannō mikki* 山王密記, *ZTZ Shintō* 1, 259a; *Hie sannō ki* 日吉山王記, *ZTZ Shintō* 1, 273b; and *Sannō ryakushō* 山王略抄, *TZ* 12, 239b. I thank Fujihira Kanden for his help in identifying these sources.

congratulate him on being appointed *zasu*.[17] Whether or not this account has any historical validity, the fact that Inari is said to have appeared as the beautiful "Holy Woman" (Seijo) to Sonni in a dream is intriguing in light of the accounts we saw earlier of the "jewel women" who appeared in dreams to monks in the Kamakura period. Amplifying this interchangeability of Nyoirin and Inari in the tradition, which is clearly depicted in the Sannō mandalas, the *Keiran shūyōshū* and other texts make clear that the "Holy Woman" refers to the deity Inari, and as we will see, that Nyoirin Kannon is considered to be Inari's original form.[18] This convergence of Seijo/Inari with Nyoirin appears to have been a central defining feature of Nyoirin's identity in the Taimitsu tradition.[19]

The Keiran shūyōshū*: A chronicle of secrets*

As we will see, the fourteenth-century *Keiran shūyōshū* can shed considerable light on the Nyoirin-Inari pairing in these mandalas. Its title has been translated by Grapard as "A Collection of Leaves Gathered from Stormy Streams," and it is in fact a vast compendium of "leaves," discrete fragments of esoteric knowledge transmitted orally and recorded on strips of paper, passed down from master to disciple in hundreds of

---

[17] Shū'in 秀胤 (19th century), *Zōsōjō sonni hosshō sonja ryakufu* 贈僧正尊意法性尊者略譜, *ZTZ Shiden* 史伝 2, 145b-146a.
[18] *T.* 76, 2410, 524a7-8. Also interesting here is that in the text, just before the Seijo = Inari passage, various *kami* are equated with the six perfections of Buddhism, and among these Inari is equated with the perfection of "giving" (Sk. *dāna*). This association might be read as a further affirmation of her link here with Nyoirin, who is the consummate "giver" to devotees by means of her wish-fulfilling jewel.
[19] Itinerant lute players (J. *biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師) who frequented the Sannō shrines and the Kumano region also propagated a belief in the legendary figure of Princess Sakagami 逆髪 as an incarnation of Nyoirin. See Ingrid Fritsch, *Japans blinde Sänger: im Schutz der Gottheit Myōon-Benzaiten* (Münich: Iudicium-Verlag, 1996), 161 and 216-18.

distinct spiritual lineages that characterized religious tradition of medieval Tendai.[20] The text consists wholly of these fragments, which were collected and compiled by the Tendai monk Kōshū between 1311 and 1348.[21] Fabio Rambelli has drawn attention to the "performative" aspect of such medieval texts, which were often passed down as signs of transmitted knowledge, filling a role more like that of money (spiritual currency) or a diploma (conferring authority) than a text to be read and understood.[22] In effect, we may interpret these fragments of esoteric knowledge as affirmation of possession of that knowledge, particularly since the most important transmission of information was oral, and in many cases that information was recorded only later.

This text is also interesting because it challenges the idea that had prevailed among scholars until relatively recently that the "new" Buddhist reform movements led by figures such as Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), Shinran, Dōgen 道元(1200-1253), Eisai 栄西 (1141-1215), and Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282) dominated the religious landscape of the Kamakura period. This text, which transmits the rhetoric and values of a rich tradition on Mt. Hiei, appears to take no interest in these new movements and practices;

---

[20] The text chronicles a secretive world of oral transmissions that were passed down in esoteric lineages in the temples of Mt. Hiei. (The other major text considered central to the Sannō combinatory tradition is the *Sange yōryakki* 山家最略記, *DNBZ* 120, 145-73.) An elaborate tradition of chronicling esoteric knowledge also existed, done by chroniclers (J. *kike* 記家), one of the four spheres of activity on Mt. Hiei believed to lead to Buddhahood: exoteric (J. *ken* 顕), esoteric (J. *mitsu* 密), discipline (J. *kai* 戒), and documents (J. *ki* 記). See Kuroda, "Historical Consciousness and *Hon-jaku* Philosophy in the Medieval Period on Mount Hiei," 147-8, and Grapard, "*Keiranshūyōshū*," 56-59. For a comprehensive overview of the text and its origins, see Tanaka Takako 田中貴子, *Keiran shūyōshū no sekai* 『渓嵐拾葉集』の世界 (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2003). See Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transormation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999) on expressions of "original enlightenment thought" (J. *hongaku shisō* 本学思想) in secret lineage traditions in medieval Tendai on Mt. Hiei.

[21] The extant form of this text consists of 113 scrolls, but it originally appears to have had some 300 scrolls, the rest of which have now been lost.

[22] Fabio Rambelli, "Texts, Talismans, and Jewels: The *Reikiki* and the Performativity of Sacred Texts in Medieval Japan," in *Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Taigen Dan Leighton (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006), 54-55.

it says nothing about Pure Land Buddhism, and mentions Zen only in reference to the Zen meditation practiced on Mt. Hiei.[23] This self-contained world gave rise to a flowering of a certain kind of associative thought that both drew on and elaborated existing esoteric traditions.

One way to interpret this body of esoteric knowledge is as an attempt to hold onto ritual power, and by extension, worldly authority as well. Since the ninth century, esoteric Tendai had competed hard with various Shingon lineages for the patronage of sovereigns and aristocrats. To put it simply, the more esoteric knowledge one possessed, the more ritual efficacy one could offer, and that knowledge was the main currency of religious authority. Beginning with Saichō, Tendai had long found itself in the role of playing catch-up to Shingon in this regard, and it was later Ennin 圓仁 (794-864), Enchin 圓珍 (814-891), and Annen 安然 (841-?) who fully incorporated esotericism into Tendai and thus elevated its position and allowed it to flourish under imperial patronage, particularly beginning with the *zasu* Ryōgen 良源 in the tenth century.[24] Near the end of the Heian period, however, when the financial fortunes of the imperial house and aristocrats who had been the most ardent supporters of Tendai esoteric ritual declined, the Enryakuji establishment also lost much of its secular power. The compilation in written form of the oral traditions reflected in the *Keiran shūyōshū* in the early fourteenth century is surely no accident, and perhaps represents a struggle to hold

[23] For a discussion of the ideological background of the text, see Grapard, "*Keiranshūyōshū*," 56-59.
[24] Like Kūkai, Saichō brought back texts and teachings related to Nyoirin from China in the early ninth century, but they seem to have had little influence at the time; it was only with Shingon's dizzying rise in popularity that Tendai too began to emphasize the worship of Nyoirin and the other esoteric forms of Kannon.

onto ground that the Tendai establishment was losing as its worldly status was called into question.[25]

Wordplay and symbolic association were among the central means of producing this new esoteric knowledge, linking one deity to another and thus expanding their identities in a mind-boggling array of combinations. This act implies the Tendai esoteric notion of "original enlightenment" (J. *hongaku shisō* 本覚思想), the idea that all beings are already buddhas, and that enlightenment is already innate in the reality of here and now, as mundane as it may appear to the unenlightened eye. Grapard has described the style of verbal dexterity this tradition engages in as "linguistic cubism."[26] Deities are endlessly linked to one another through verbal or visual puns. In fact, it is not clear whether these games were ever playful in nature, or whether they were always in deadly earnest (or perhaps the two were not viewed as entirely separate modes of thought). These games do suggest that it is when a deity's name is reduced to its linguistic elements that it becomes fertile ground for these creative acts to be carried out.

One famous example of this mechanism from the *Keiran shūyōshū* is a re-reading of the phrase "Dainihon koku" 大日本国, which means "The Great Country of Japan." When the same characters are grouped differently, they can be read as "Dainichi no honkoku," or "The original land of Dainichi," or Mahāvairocana, the central cosmic Buddha of the esoteric Buddhist tradition.[27] This phrase also expresses another central feature of the text, which is that it engages in what has been called the "mandalization"

---

[25] On the decline of the shrine-temple complexes that had played such a central role in the *kenmon taisei* of medieval Japan, see Mikael S. Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).
[26] See Grapard, "Linguistic Cubism."
[27] *T.* 76, 2410, 511a13-14.

not only of Mt. Hiei but of all of Japan, placing Japan and the imperial court at the center of the universe, a move that had long been necessary as Buddhism developed in Japan, since Japan otherwise might have languished on the sidelines of Buddhist cosmology.

"Holy Woman," holy women

Now I would like to venture into the territory of this vast compendium, taking the Nyoirin-Inari pairing as our starting point, to examine two distinct patterns surrounding Nyoirin that emerge in this text that link her, once again by means of her attribute of the *cintāmaṇi*, with two different "groups" of female deities. Though far from linear in structure, the *Keiran shūyōshū* is loosely organized into sections on various topics, and Nyoirin surfaces in several different areas of the text, often surrounded by clusters of similar themes that probably reflect certain pervasive Taimitsu beliefs. In this case, the themes can be loosely grouped first, into her association with Inari (and other fox deities) and the sun goddess Amaterasu; and second, with the originally Indian river goddess Benzaiten—whose female dragon-like nature calls to mind that of Seiryō Gongen—as well as with the eight-year-old daughter of the dragon king Sāgara, who famously attains enlightenment and offers her wish-fulfilling jewel to Śākyamuni in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In the first group, Inari in turn is identified with the former flesh-eating fox-riding goddess Dakiniten. It is significant that Nyoirin and Dakiniten were both enshrined as the main deities in rites for the protection of the sovereign and nation, a theme we will return to shortly. As we will see, these "fox" and

“dragon” entities are not unrelated, particularly in the sense that *nāga*, snakes, and foxes are quasi-demonic, quasi-divine entities that possess wish-fulfilling jewels, and in fact are identified explicitly with each other in the *Keiran shūyōshū*.[28]

After exploring these two deity “groups” in the text, we will also look at a third association pattern that emerges in it, that of Nyoirin’s identification with Japan’s legendary Buddhist ruler Prince Shōtoku and the Rokkakudō (lit. “Hexagonal Hall”), a temple in Kyoto he is said to have founded, which was also the place where Shinran dreamed of his “jewel woman.” Nyoirin as Shōtoku highlights her imperial associations from a different angle, linking her not only with the imperial consort or deity enshrined in palace rites, but with the ruler himself, and Shinran’s dream thus brings us full circle, back to the dreaming monks with which we began this study.

A. *Nyoirin = Inari-Dakini = Amaterasu*

Returning now to the *Keiran shūyōshū*, one of the most fascinating of these passages linking Nyoirin to Inari (and other foxes) occurs in a section of the text dealing with esoteric transmission about various places and themes in Japan. This passage alludes to a famous episode in Japanese mythology, recorded in the Kōjiki 古事記 (compiled in 712), in which the sun goddess Amaterasu, divine ancestor of the Japanese imperial family, is disturbed when her brother Susanoo 須佐之男 goes on a rampage of destruction in heaven, hides herself in a rock cave and closes the door behind her,

[28] The identification between foxes and snakes or dragons is a widespread theme in Japanese shamanistic traditions, which surely influenced the oral traditions in this text. See Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975).

causing darkness to fall in the world. The other gods eventually manage to coax her to come out with laughter and dancing, and then show her her own image in a mirror, which pleases her, so that she resumes her task of lighting the world. Like many passages in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, this one is framed as a question-and-answer dialogue, presumably between master and disciple:

> Question: [When] Amaterasu closes the heavenly rock door and secludes herself, what wild beast form [does she take]?[29] Answer: Ordinarily Amaterasu takes the form of the sun goddess sitting on top of the sun wheel, when she closes the heavenly rock door and secludes herself. It is also said: A transmission says: After Amaterasu descends from heaven, [when she] secludes herself behind the heavenly rock door, it is in the form of an astral fox.[30] Among all the beasts, the astral fox gives off light by itself. That is why the *kami* appears in that form.

> Question: Why does the astral fox always give off light? Answer: The astral fox is a transformation of Nyoirin Kannon. Because [Nyoirin] takes the *cintāmaṇi* as [his/her] body, [his/her] name is "Cintāmaṇi Sovereign."[31] This jewel always [gives off] light at night.

---

[29] *T.* 76, 2410, 520c20-25. Faure discusses this passage in the context of relic worship; see Faure, "Now You See It, Now You Don't," 22. Iyanaga also analyzes it in connection to Nyoirin Kannon's identification with Dakiniten. See Iyanaga, *Kannon henyō tan,* 587-91.

[30] In medieval Japanese texts the term "astral fox" (J. *shinko*) refers to Dakiniten.

[31] Later in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, the text of another bit of secret lore confirms that "Shindamani ō 辰陀摩尼王 is an epithet for Dakiniten. See *T.* 76, 2410, 732a. This passage explains that the *cintāmaṇi* is Dakiniten's *samaya* form, and then describes her seven fox attendants, which symbolize the seven jewels of the *cakravartin*.

In a move typical of this text, in the name "Shindamani" 辰陀摩尼 it plays with the first character, normally a transliteration of the Sanskrit "cin," but here replaced with the "shin" 辰 of "shinko" 辰狐, or astral fox.

"Shindamani ō" is also linked to Benzaiten, who in the Tendai esoteric is sometimes called by the epithet "Nyoi hōju ō" ("Cintāmaṇi Sovereign"). It is probably no accident both Dakiniten and Benzaiten are referred to by variations of this name. See the rich study of Benzaiten in the *Keiran shūyōshū* and Tendai esoteric tradition by Yamamoto Hiroko 山本ひろ子, *Ijin—Chūsei nihon no mikkyōteki sekai* 異神—中世日本の密教的世界, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chikuma gakugei bunko, 2003), 9-139.

That is why when mantras and offerings are made, it is said that the *maṇi* [gem][32] is a lamp. Either way, [they] can be thought of as one. It is also said: The astral fox's tail has three points.[33] Above the three points there is a *cintāmaṇi*. The three points are the three-pointed fire form.[34] The jewel is also the fire of the lamp of the *maṇi* [gem]. For this reason this *kami* manifests magnificent light that illuminates the *dharmadhātu*.[35] And so forth.

It is also said: One transmission says: A miracle sutra[36] explains: Worship the astral fox and become the sovereign. This takes Amaterasu to be the original *kami*, and Vairocana as the *kami* [with which she is] customarily [identified].[37]

In effect, this passage reveals that Amaterasu, when she hid herself behind the "heavenly rock door," took the form of an "astral fox," which was itself a transformation of Nyoirin Kannon. What is striking here is that in the passage these three entities—Amaterasu, the astral fox, and Nyoirin—are linked by the imagery of

---

[32] In Japanese, *maṇi* is a shortened term for *cintāmaṇi*.

[33] "Three points" alludes to the three-pointed vajra (J. *sanko sho* 三鈷杵) ritual implement of esoteric Buddhism, the most common form of vajra (though a vajra may have one, two, three, four, five, or nine points or prongs), which in turn stands for the unity of "three mysteries" (J. *sanmitsu* 三密) of body, speech, and mind. See E. Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 187-8.

[34] The three-pointed fire form refers here to the "fire" wheel of the five-wheel stupa, which is triangular in shape. The five wheels correspond with the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and space. In esoteric Buddhism "fire" refers not only to physical fire but also to the fire of wisdom.

[35] J. *hokkai* 法界, Ch. *fajie*. Here meaning the entire world, the universe.

[36] J. *mizō* 未曾有, Ch. *weicengyou*, Sk. *adbhuta-dharma*. Something unusual or miraculous; rare rites, or miracles performed by buddhas and bodhisattvas. Here, a Buddhist text that describes these amazing phenomena. One of the twelve classes of Buddhist teachings. The content of this passage suggests that here the term likely refers to a text created in Heian Japan.

[37] The epithet *hyakkō* 百光 here may refer to *hyakkō henjō ō* 百光遍昭王, an epithet for Mahāvairocana, literally "the king who universally shines with a hundred lights." Because elsewhere the text does explicitly equate Amaterasu with Vairocana, I have chosen to interpret the passage in this way.

light: the sun (lit. "sun wheel") is identified as the *cintāmaṇi*, which is also a lamp, or the shining jewel on the fox's tail, that gives off light by itself at night.[38] This passage is certainly linked to our mandala images of Nyoirin and Seijo: while "Inari" is not explicitly mentioned, we do find here that Nyoirin is identified with Amaterasu, who takes the form of the "astral fox."

It is also worth noting that here the fox's tail has "three points." In several Sannō mandala images Nyoirin and Seijo each hold "threefold" jewels, and we can assume that we are probably not mistaken in reading this text in connection with these images. The threefold or "three-pointed" jewel here is associated not only with the fox's tail, but also with the triangular form associated with fire in the five-wheel stupa of esoteric Buddhism, in which each "wheel" corresponds to one of the five elements. It also probably alludes to the "threefold truth" of Tendai Buddhism—the absolute, the conventional, and the middle path.[39]

In medieval Japanese texts, "astral fox" is another name for Dakiniten, a pre-Buddhist Indian goddess that came to Japan with Buddhism and merged with the indigenous Inari. In India Dākinī—like Inari in Japan—was originally a goddess of agriculture; she is also a female attendant of Kālī, consort of Śiva, who eventually

[38] This overlapping light-fire-jewel imagery calls to mind Edward Schafer's description of "fire orbs," brought to Tang China from various far-flung locations; these exotic objects seem to have been crystals used to focus the sun's light and create a flame. In China they came to be associated not only with bronze mirrors and other types of luminous jewels, but also with "dragon-pearls" and *cintāmaṇi* belonging to Indian *nāga*, symbolic orbs used to adorn the tops of ceremonial halls, and even the phosphorescent eyes of whales. His brief account makes clear that it is impossible to know what the *cintāmaṇi* or jewel "really" is in any given context, because it likely rarely had only a single referent, but reflected many different notions in circulation at the time. See Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 237-9.
[39] The threefold form of the jewel is not unique to this tradition; it appears, for example, in the image of one of the two-armed forms of Nyoirin in the *Kakuzen shō*. Such jewels are most often depicted, however, as one object rather than three.

became known as a flesh-eating demoness that would descend upon a person six months before he died to eat his heart. In Japan, Dakiniten merged with Inari (our "holy woman" in the Sannō mandala images), and in Japan she is often depicted as a beautiful woman riding a white fox, holding a *cintāmaṇi*; as this text reflects, the two deities were in some sense interchangeable in the medieval imagination.[40]

The jewels possessed by foxes and by Dakiniten are worth pausing to consider here, in their iconographic overlapping with Nyoirin's *cintāmaṇi*. While in China fox deities were often believed to carry a magical jewel within their hearts, in Japan foxes were thought rather to carry jewels on their tails or in their mouths, which may glow brightly at night.[41] In both cases, foxes' jewels offered protection, wish-fulfillment, or the power of transformation. Tanaka Takako has done intriguing research suggesting that Dakiniten's jewel hearkens back to her flesh-eating demonic nature, as it may also symbolize perfectly distilled "human yellow," the life force extracted when the body is eaten; indeed Tanaka suggests that this dark liminal power Dakiniten possessed, translated into creative life energy, was one reason she came to be enshrined in some versions of imperial enthronement rites in medieval Japan.[42]

---

[40] For a good introduction to Dakiniten's origins and transformations in Japan, see Sasama Yoshihiko 笹間良彦, *Dakini shinkō to sono zokushin* ダキニ信仰とその俗信 (Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1988). It is not clear why Dakini and Inari converged, since Dakiniten does not appear to have been associated with foxes in India or China; Smyers draws attention to the theory that the flesh-eating, death-seeking Dakini demoness was associated with jackals, which may have merged with foxes in Japanese iconography. See Smyers, *The Fox and the Jewel*, 82-85.
[41] Smyers, *The Fox and the Jewel*, 126-27.
[42] Tanaka Takako 田中貴子, *Gehō to aihō no chūsei* 外法と愛法の中世 (Tokyo: Sunakoya shobō, 1993), 244-50. On enthronement rites and the connections between sovereigns and the "marginal," see Allan G. Grapard, "Of Emperors and Foxy Ladies," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 13 (2002-3), *Moines, rois et marginaux: Études sur le bouddhisme médiéval japonais*: 127-49. See also Yamamoto Hiroko, *Henjōfu* 変成譜 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1993), 289-378.

In the passage we looked at, the line "Worship the astral fox, and become the sovereign" shows, as Iyanaga and other scholars have suggested, that while on one hand in Japan the Indian belief in Dakini as a flesh-eating demoness persisted, at the same time by the fourteenth century she was enshrined as the main deity in esoteric Buddhist imperial enthronement rites. It is no accident that it was Nyoirin who filled this role on other occasions. Abe Yasuro has shown that, according to the *Himitsu gentei kuketsu* 秘密源底秘決, a Shingon text dating to 1338 and attributed to the powerful Shingon monk Monkan 文観 (1278-1357), who was associated with the controversial Tachikawa 立川 sect, two jewels (relics) that were then "transformed" into Nyoirin were enshrined as the main deity in one version of the rite, flanked by Fudō Myōō on the left and Aizen Myōō on the right.[43] Indeed, according to Abe, Nyoirin's identification with both Amaterasu and Dakiniten was key to her role in this imperial ritual. The text itself explains that Nyoirin (equated with the relics) is none other than the deity Ichiji Kinrin, and also a transformation of Amaterasu.[44] At the same time—in a parallel structure that pairs Nyoirin with Dakiniten—according to an alternate version of the rite performed by the Hirosawa branch of Shingon, Dakiniten was instead enshrined as the main deity in imperial coronation rites, flanked by Shōten 聖天 (Ch.

---

[43] Abe notes that this is the same arrangement as the triad enshrined at Kanshinji in Osaka prefecture. See Abe, "Hōju to ōken," 152-4. He also discusses the sexual symbolism of the rite, expressed in the "red" Aizen and "white" Fudō, representing male and female energies, themes also associated with the Tachikawa branch of Shingon. See also Iyanaga, *Kannon henyō tan*, 590-91.

The triad of Nyoirin, Aizen, and Fudō is important in other contexts as well. For example, it was enshrined in a ritual allegedly begun by Shōkaku, in which a five-wheel stupa, with its relic symbolism, stood in for Nyoirin. Following Shōkaku's lead, in 1260 Eison 叡尊 (1201-1290), founder of the Shingon Ritsu sect, established a similar ritual at Saidaiji 西大寺 in Nara, in which the main object of worship was a reliquary. See Naitō Sakae, "'Busshari to hōju' tenkaisetsu," 182-3.

[44] It is worth recalling that Ichij Kinrin Butchō and Butsugen Butsumō figure prominently in Jien's dream, mentioned earlier in this study, in which they correspond to the sexual union between the sovereign and his consort, as well as to two of the imperial regalia, the sword and the jewel.

Shengtian, Sk. Gaṇeśa) and Benzaiten. While this complex layering of deities no doubt deserves further analysis and research, for our purposes it is sufficient to say that here we observe the same identification of Nyoirin with Amaterasu as in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, and that in these two variant versions of the rite Nyoirin and Dakiniten also converge, suggesting that our passage is not an isolated bit of esoteric lore, but probably tapped into a widespread belief in a primal source of power that by the fourteenth century was deemed necessary for the legitimization of imperial rule.

This Nyoirin-Amaterasu identification is carried even further when we look at the passage that appears right before our selection of text, which helps to further illuminate what is going on in it. This previous section is entitled "Where is the heavenly rock door located?" It notes that according to a secret transmission from Kūkai, there is a hidden cave behind a shrine building at Ise in which stones are laid out in formations symbolizing the Womb and Vajra Realm Mandalas, and this place is none other than the "Heavenly Rock Door." Even as the text identifies Nyoirin-Inari as Amaterasu, then, it also connects Mt. Hiei to the shrines at Ise: Nyoirin is here, but as Amaterasu she is also, at the same time, there, dwelling in a cave that is none other than the two symbolic "worlds" of esoteric Buddhism.[45] The Inner Shrine of Ise on the east coast of the Kii peninsula, in western Honshū, is of course revered as the earthly home of Amaterasu, divine ancestor of the Japanese imperial family. There is no doubt that the connection between Nyoirin and Amaterasu in our text reflects the worship of wish-fulfilling jewels in connection with the imperial regalia (mirror, sword, and jewel), and

[45] When our passage also connects Amaterasu to Dainichi, or Vairocana, it reaffirms the "mandalized" notion of Japan is the center of the cosmic universe.

in fact Brian Ruppert has shown that the Buddhist notion of the *cintāmaṇi* as Buddha relic had already become linked to both Ise and the jewel of the imperial regalia by the mid-thirteenth century, if not earlier.[46] At the same time, while here we see the Sannō tradition linking itself with Ise, it is important to keep in mind that by the fourteenth century the Buddhist-Shintō traditions that flourished on Mt. Hiei and at Ise competed fiercely with each other for power and patronage, as did the Inner and Outer Shrines at Ise themselves, which enshrine Amaterasu and the food and water god Toyouke 豊受 respectively.[47]

Other passages in the *Keiran shūyōshū* corroborate this identification of Nyoirin-Inari with Amaterasu in different ways. Near the end of the text, for example, we find a statement resembling our previous example, with a slight twist. Here the "astral fox" (Dakiniten) form Amaterasu takes upon the occasion of shutting herself away behind the heavenly rock door is said to be really a *nāga*, which (like the fox in our previous example) among all the animals *gives off a light of its own*.[48] Though the text does not give a reason, *nāga* were also of course believed to be guardians and possessors of *cintāmaṇi*. The astral fox is a transformation of Nyoirin Kannon, and here because she holds a *cintāmaṇi*, she is called "Shindamani ō" 辰陀摩尼王, or Cintāmaṇi King.[49] The fox-*nāga* link that emerges in this passage becomes even more significant when we consider that during the medieval period Amaterasu was also widely

---

[46] See Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine."
[47] The mention of the connection between the two mandalas and Ise reflects the influence of the system of thought called Ryōbu Shintō, which associates the two mandalas of Shingon esoteric Buddhism with the Inner and Outer Ise Shrines. On Ryōbu Shintō, and for a good overview of medieval Shintō in general, see Itō Satoshi "The Medieval Period," 63-107.
[48] *T*. 76, 2410, 867b7-11.
[49] See n. 28. This passage echoes the wordplay in our previous passage with "Shindamani ō," as "shin" is again written with the "shin" 辰 of "shinko" 辰狐, astral fox. The passage concludes by reiterating the three-pointed form of the fox's tail, once again linking it to the three-cornered shape of the fire element.

considered to be a snake deity, and often male rather than female.[50] This overlapping of foxes and *nāga* offers an important clue to sorting out the various aspects of Nyoirin's mutable nature. As we have seen, Nyoirin has long been seen as the original form (along with Juntei Kannon) of the female dragon deity Seiryō Gongen, and in the *Keiran shūyōshū* she is also equated with the water deity Benzaiten and the "dragon girl" of the Lotus Sutra, a theme we will return to shortly.

Elsewhere the *Keiran shūyōshū* not only identifies Nyoirin with Amaterasu, but also refers to Nyoirin's enshrinement as the main deity in an important set of rituals for the protection of the sovereign and nation that were performed in the Futama (lit. "Two-Mat Room"), a room the size of two tatami mats, located next to the sovereign's bedroom in the imperial palace. Near the very beginning of the text, for example, we find an item titled "The rituals of the Futama."[51]

> A teaching says: In the palace, the place where the sacred mirror[52] is enshrined is the Futama. It is also named the Venerable Place (J. Kashikodokoro 貴所). For this reason, the monk who goes to [perform] rituals in the Futama is called a Venerable Place [monk]. In the Enryakuji [tradition], this is Jōzō Kisho 浄藏貴所.[53] In the Tōji [tradition], it is also

[50] See Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 297-300. For a study of Amaterasu's transformations in medieval Japan, see Satō Hiroo 佐藤弘夫, *Amaterasu no henbō—chūsei shinbutsu kōshōshi no shiza* アマテラスの変貌—中世神仏交渉史の視座 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2000).

[51] *T.* 76, 2410, 511c2-10.

[52] The name given here is Naishidokoro 内侍所, which is the name of the place in the imperial palace where the sacred mirror of Amaterasu (Yatanokagami 八咫鏡), one of the three imperial regalia, is enshrined (also called Kashikodokoro); but here the term refers to the mirror itself.

[53] Jōzō 浄藏 (891-964) was a Tendai monk of Enryakuji and son of the public official and scholar Miyoshi Kiyoyuki (847-918). Famed for his skill in esoteric ritual, in 909 he practiced rites for healing the illness of Fujiwara no Tokihira 藤原時平 (871-909).

Kakimoto no Kisōjō 柿本貴僧正.[54] Its main deity is Nyoirin Kannon. This is a most secret matter. It must not be told to outsiders. It also says: Amaterasu is Nyoirin Kannon. In the mirror of the Naishidokoro, Amaterasu's form is reflected. In reality, this mirror is the complete *samaya* form of the heart moon[55] that illuminates the *dharmadhātu*.

For our purposes, the most important element here is that Nyoirin is named as the main deity in the Futama rites, and at the same time she is again explicitly identified as Amaterasu. In fact this passage (and similar references in the *Keiran shūyōshū*) is one of the key pieces of evidence we have that Nyoirin Kannon was enshrined in the Futama. The prominence of the two early Heian monks mentioned here, one belonging to the Enryakuji school of Tendai and the other to the Tōmitsu 東密 (Shingon esoteric) school, and their involvement at court, suggests that it is possible the two did perform rites to Nyoirin in the Futama. By the Heian period high-ranking monks from Mt. Hiei, Tōji, and Miidera 三井寺 are all known to have performed these rites; the dates of these two monks, however, place them slightly earlier than when it is believed these rites to Kannon in the Futama began, which is sometime from the late tenth to the mid-eleventh centuries onward.[56] Rites were performed each evening by special "guardian monks" (J. *gojisō* 護持僧) for the protection of the nation, as well as on the eighteenth

[54] Shinzei 眞済 (800-860). A senior disciple of Kūkai, he is said to have composed Kūkai's earliest extant biography, the *Kūkai sōzuden* 空海僧都伝, though its authorship is disputed. In 856 the sovereign Montoku 文徳 (827-858, r. 850-858) appointed him to the rank of *sōjō*, the same year Kūkai was posthumously granted the title of *daisōjō* 大僧正 ("archbishop"); and in 858 Shinzei performed rites to heal the sovereign's illness.
[55] J. *shingachirin* 心月輪. Refers to the esoteric ritual practice of visualizing the human heart as a full moon, symbolizing the perfect mind of enlightenment.
[56] For a discussion of the enshrinement of Kannon in the Futama and its links to the worship of wish-fulfilling jewels, see Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine," 3-5.

day of each month, enshrining three forms of Kannon—Shō, Jūichimen, and Nyoirin.[57] The Futama was located directly adjacent to the sovereign's bedroom, where he slept with the two other royal regalia, the sword and jewel, and scholars have suggested that this passage of the *Keiran shūyōshū* indicates that the Kannon figures enshrined there filled the structural role of the divine mirror of Amaterasu, the third of the regalia.[58] That is, this view may explain why our text says that the "mirror" itself was enshrined in the Futama, and also that Amaterasu is identical with Nyoirin. In addition to these nightly and monthly rites, probably beginning during the reign of the sovereign Gosanjō 後三条 (1034-1073, r. 1068-1072), a series of rituals for protection of the sovereign called the "Three Altars Rites" (J. *sandan mishihō* 三壇御修法) was also held in the Futama, and included monks from Enryakuji performing rites to Nyoirin, monks from Tōji performing longevity rites to the bodhisattva Fugen 普賢 (Sk. Samantabhadra), and monks from Miidera (or in other cases the Nara Shingon temple of Enjōji 圓城寺) performing rites to Fudō.[59]

To return to our text, a few lines after the passage about Nyoirin enshrined at the Futama, we find another selection on Nyoirin, once again in connection to the Ise shrines. Titled "The unspoken matter of the original form [of the deity] of Ise Shrine," the text affirms that the original deity of Ise is the sun goddess (Amaterasu), but notes

---

[57] *T.* 76, 2410, 797c12-16. The text specifies that it is the six-armed Nyoirin enshrined in this case. See also Abe, *Hōju to ōken*," particularly 123-25 and 136; Iyanaga, *Kannon henyō tan*, 575-76; and Inoue, "Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō," 35-6.

[58] See Abe, *Hōju to ōken*, 123-4 and Iyanaga, *Kannon henyō tan*, 575-76. This idea calls to mind the homology between Nyoirin and Amaterasu's mirror that we saw earlier in the *Ishiyamadera engi* when, on the occasion of a great fire, the image of Nyoirin flies out of the temple, just as the mirror of Amaterasu once did when the imperial palace was burning.

[59] Inoue, "Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō," 36. Inoue notes that by the reign of the sovereign Takakura (1161-1181, r. 1168-1180) the rites were performed by monks from Enryakuji, Enjōji, and Tōji.

that the original deity of the shrine is in fact Nyoirin.[60] In fact, the text continues, for generations, when enemies posed a threat, shrines affiliated with the twenty-one Sannō shrines performed rites to Nyoirin to ward them off. The text cites a Nyoirin text, which it names as the *Tōhyō nyoirin no giki* 都表如意輪の儀軌, to justify the belief that Nyoirin could be the "original form" of the Ise deity.[61] What is most striking here is that Nyoirin is identified as the original form of Amaterasu enshrined at Ise, and that affiliate Sannō shrines pray to this deity for Japan to defeat its enemies. Like her enshrinement in the Futama rites, at the very least this confirms that Nyoirin-as-Amaterasu was worshipped also in matters of national defense.

It is significant that the *Keiran shūyōshū* refers to Nyoirin not only as Amaterasu, and as enshrined in the Futama, but also—like the twelfth-century *Kakuzen shō*—as explicitly female. In one lengthy section that lists various aspects of Nyoirin rites, texts, and iconography, we find the following question and answer: "Which of the Kannon appears in this world as a woman? Which one, among the six Kannon? Answer:

---

[60] *T.* 76, 2410, 511c17-25.

[61] It is not clear which text the author is referring to here. It could be some version of *T.* 1089, *Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa*, or of *T.* 1085, *Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui*. In esoteric Buddhism *yigui* 儀軌 (J. *giki*) is a generic term meaning "commentary" or "rule"; in a Japanese esoteric Buddhist context it usually refers to a text that specifies ritual or iconographic details. Defeating enemies is a benefit mentioned in several Tang translations of Ruyilun sutras, but the one devoted specifically to a rite to be performed for achieving this result is the *Qixing ruyilun bimiyao jing*.

In *T.* 1089, the "Dubiao" and therefore the most likely candidate for this reference, a passage does in fact appear that would seem to justify Ruyilun's manifestation in the form of a local deity. My translation of this passage is as follows: "The bodhisattva's transformations are everywhere, and all accord with what gives pleasure to the hearts of those sentient beings. He also returns to establish a precious storehouse of many kinds of dharma gates, each one unlike the others. He accords with [the ways] of a million countries, one by one granting all [things that are] sought." *T.* 20, 1089, 219a26-28.

Another passage in the *Keiran shūyōshū* that describes Nyoirin enshrined, along with Jūichimen Kannon and Shō Kannon, also in the context of justifying Nyoirin's manifestation as Amaterasu, refers to this combining of the two as the matter of the "Tōhyō Nyoirin."

The Kannon that appears in female forms is Nyoirin.'"[62] In this section the text also affirms in two places that Nyoirin is the "collective" body of the six Kannon.[63] At the same time, elsewhere in the text she is deemed the Kannon who appears in this ordinary world (J. *shaba* 娑婆). These statements suggest that Nyoirin's feminine identity within the Taimitsu tradition probably helped link her to the goddess figures of Amaterasu and Inari. An image emerges here of a powerful Nyoirin who purposely takes a female form—appropriating those of indigenous female *kami* when necessary—in order to lead deluded, desire-blinded humans to enlightenment, to fulfill their wishes (often the sexual wishes of men, it would seem) in order to lead them to the truth, much as in the case of Nyoirin as the "jewel woman" who becomes the sovereign's wife.

The "resident" Nyoirin of the Hie shrine complex, then, is here revealed to be none other than the original form of both Amaterasu and Inari, two of the most powerful *kami* in Japan, and important protectors of its ancestral lineage as well as its day-to-day sustenance. I would also suggest that this serves as one example of the Tendai esoteric tradition's proclivity to link Mt. Hiei with specific sites imbued with political authority and power: the heavenly rock cave, the shrines of Ise, the inner sanctum of the imperial palace itself. The text maps these locations in the form of a mandala, securing its own place within this tradition of esoteric lore in doctrinal as well as geographical terms. Nyoirin, like other deities in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, serves as a pivot linking goddess to goddess, place to place. Following these links like stepping stones, we are led in a

---

[62] *T.* 76, 2410, 587c5-7.
[63] *T.* 76, 2410, 587b20-22 and c9-10.

circular path from Mt. Hiei to the imperial palace to Ise, a pilgrimage to the centers of imperial power in medieval Japan.

B. *Nyoirin = Benzaiten = dragon girl*

Now I want to turn to another set of associations that we find echoed throughout the *Keiran shūyōshū*—related in intriguing ways to our Nyoirin-Inari-Amaterasu triad—in which Nyoirin is equated with the female dragon deity Benzaiten, enshrined on the nearby island of Chikubushima 竹生島 in Lake Biwa, and at the same time with the dragon girl of the "southern direction" who famously attains enlightenment before Śākyamuni and his entourage on Vulture Peak in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.[64] These dragon connections of course call to mind Nyoirin's earlier incarnation in Japan as the "original form" of the dragon goddess Seiryō Gongen on Mt. Kasatori. Like Seiryō Gongen, these dragons too possess magical wish-fulfilling jewels, and once again it is the jewel that serves as the major linking element in the Sannō tradition's self-consciously creative myth-spinning endeavors. Nyoirin with her jewel dwells on Mt. Hiei, yet at the same time as the *nāga* girl she dwells on Vulture Peak with Śākyamuni, in the dragon king's palace under the sea, in the "undefiled" southern direction, and at Chikubushima.

[64] Chikubushima is a small island that actually lies at the northern end of Lake Biwa, north of Mt. Hiei, with a circumference of only two kilometers, where Benzaiten is still enshrined today. Long before Benzaiten's arrival the water *kami* Azai-hime-no-mikoto 浅井比売命 was worshipped there to insure the safety of water traffic on the lake. In the Nara period the island was an important site for itinerant monks practicing austerities. From the Heian period onward Benzaiten took her place there as the "original form" of the local *kami*. Benzaiten is said to dwell high on the island, while the local dragon god dwells in the depths of the lake, a theme we will soon find echoed in the text.

While in our previous examples the jewel served as the pivot that revealed the oneness of the deities' identities, here the direction "south" is also employed to that end. The dragon girl is associated with the undefiled southern direction, which according to esoteric tradition is symbolized by the element of fire, which burns away all defilements, and with yang or male energy. Thus, as Faure has noted, in this text to go to the south is equivalent to becoming male, and the south is conceived of as a place without women.[65] Ironically, then, amidst the plethora of feminine deities with which Nyoirin is here identified, the dragon girl of the south represents a transformation into a male as a necessary step on the path to Buddhahood. Nyoirin is said in the text to be the original form of Benzaiten of Chikubushima, but at the same time she is identified in these passages specifically with the two-armed Nyoirin of Ishiyamadera, which does lie to the south of Mt. Hiei.

The *Keiran shūyōshū* contains two extensive chapters on Benzaiten, a water or serpent goddess of music, eloquence, and wealth who originated as the personified Hindu deity of the Sarasvatī river.[66] Benzaiten appears in various iconographic forms, from two-armed to eight-armed; in India as Sarasvatī she is most likely to appear as a beautiful goddess holding a lute. Though her image is less commonly found in China and Tibet, in Japan she also usually takes the form of a beautiful woman, in her two-armed form holding a lute, or with eight arms holding various implements, and her shrines are always located near water. In Japan Benzaiten became known through her

[65] Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 96.
[66] The Sarasvatī is a river of Vedic times, often identified as the Ghaggar-Hakra River, which today flows only during monsoon season and originates in the state of Himachal Pradesh in northwest India.

prominent role in the *Suvarnaprabhasa-sūtra*.[67] In the fifteenth or sixteenth century she was adopted as one of Japan's seven gods of fortune (J. *shichifukujin* 七福神), and is still worshipped by many in Japan today who hope to benefit from her wealth-granting powers. In medieval Japan, two separate forms of Benzaiten were popular: Myōon Benzaiten 妙音辨才天, the two-armed female deity more reminiscent of her Indian form, holding a lute, and Uga Benzaiten 宇賀辨才天, who is eight-armed and depicted holding various objects, including a wish-fulfilling jewel. This second form of the deity also bears a strange head accoutrement, a small *torii* or shrine gate under which lies a coiled snake that has the head of an old man. In an extensive study of Benzaiten's place in Tendai esoteric thought, particularly in the *Keiran shūyōshū* and related texts, Yamamoto has shown that it is this second form of Benzaiten that was the object of widespread devotion on Mt. Hiei, as well as on Chikubushima; in fact, by the fourteenth century Enryakuji was probably the greatest stronghold of faith in both Uga-Benzaiten and the deity Ugajin 宇賀神 (also pronounced "Ukajin," or "Uka no kami"), to whom she is related.[68] In fact, this curious form of Benzaiten is a hybrid form of the two, Benzaiten combined with Ugajin, an indigenous Japanese grain deity, often female, who later became a goddess of happiness and wealth (possibly as a result of her merging with Benzaiten), and who takes the form of a large white snake or a fox. Benzaiten is also identified with Japanese goddesses of the sea, and possibly with the specific

[67] Ch. *Jin guang ming jing* 金光明經, J. *Konkōmyō kyō*. See *T*. 16, 665.
[68] Yamamoto, *Ijin*, 12-13. Yamamoto also notes that the human-headed snake form of Ugajin is often found in Inari shrines in the area once known as Yamashiro-no-kuni 山城の国, now southeastern Kyoto prefecture, which is interesting when we consider the strong links in this tradition between Inari and Benzaiten.

resident *kami* of Chikubushima and other prominent Benzaiten sites, such as the island of Enoshima 江ノ島, located in what is today Kanagawa 神奈川 prefecture.

Regarding Benzaiten's serpent nature, Tanaka has drawn attention to the fact, evident from a passage in the *Keiran shūyōshū,* that around the years 1316 to 1320, Kōshū lived at Seiryūji 青龍寺, a temple in Kurodani 黒谷 in the Saitō 西塔 area of Mt. Hiei. Seiryūji was named for Qinglongsi, the temple in Xian where Kūkai had studied when he was in China; and of course Seiryū (or Seiryō) is also the name of the Buddhist guardian water deity Seiryō Gongen who, in human form, is depicted as a beautiful woman holding a wish-fulfilling jewel.[69] Because Kōshū lived in this temple in the valley of Kurodani, which had running water flowing through it (in fact he likens the character of the valley to a female or *yin* form), Tanaka speculates that perhaps in Kurodani there was a natural inclination toward faith in water goddesses, which might even explain Kōshū's inclusion of so many oral traditions concerning the water goddess Benzaiten in the *Keiran shūyōshū*.[70]

In medieval Japan, the *nāga* or snake deity (the two often overlapped) represented both ignorance and awakening, both the defiled desire-plagued nature that human beings strive to overcome, and innate enlightenment.[71] In fact the snake form that Benzaiten sometimes assumes resonates with the concept of the medieval notion of a small snake, living in the "golden waters" of the lungs, that was believed to be the embodiment of innate enlightenment.[72] Snakes and dragons had an enduring reputation as quasi-demonic entities who could do a lot of harm if they had not been converted to

---

[69] Tanaka, *Keiranshūyōshū no sekai,* 15-16.
[70] Ibid., 16.
[71] See Yamamoto, *Ijin*, vol. 2, 10-139.
[72] Ibid., 121-22.

benevolent protectors of Buddhism; and their dual nature in medieval Japan also has much to do their possession of wish-fulfilling jewels, which converged with the worship of *cintāmaṇi* as Buddha relics, sources of inexhaustible wealth and wish-fulfillment, including the blessing of Buddhist enlightenment.[73]

With these themes in mind, let us look at a few specific examples of the means by which Nyoirin Kannon is identified with these dragon deities in the *Keiran shūyōshū*. In one key passage, the text starts out by likening Benzaiten's manifesting herself at Chikubushima to the dragon girl of the Lotus Sutra arriving at Vulture Peak (J. Ryōjusen 霊鷲山, Sk. Gṛdhrakūṭa), the mountain in central India where Śākyamuni is said to have preached the Lotus Sutra.[74] The dragon girl of the Lotus Sutra, the text says, "enters the jewel sector *samādhi*," which clearly refers to the "jewel sector" (J. *hōbu* 寶部) of the Vajra Realm mandala, corresponding with the Buddha Ratnasambhava, the direction south, and the *samaya* form of the wish-fulfilling jewel.[75] After pursuing a complex line of reasoning linking Chikubushima with Vulture Peak, the text goes on to say that the original form of the Chikubushima deity is the Nyoirin Kannon of Ishiyamadera, and here it notes that the "undefiled southern direction" associated with the dragon girl also indicates Ishiyamadera, which lies to the south. Of

---

[73] See, for example, Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 94-99.

While Nyoirin is often identified with these water deities, she also has a strong chthonian aspect. Her links to earth deities and the underworld are evident in her identification with Amaterasu, for example, who is in turn identified with Yama (J. Enma, Ch. Yanmo 閻魔), lord of the underworld; and with Jizō, also an earth god and identified with Yama, and known for saving those suffering in hell. In the *Keiran shūyōshū*, Nyoirin's alter-ego Benzaiten also features in an earth-quelling ritual; see *T.* 76, 2410, 724a2-10. On Amaterasu and Yama, see Mark Teeuwen, "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity: Amaterasu as the Judge of the Dead," in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan:* Honji Suijaku *as a Combinatory Paradigm*, ed. Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 115-44. On Nyoirin's chthonian associations, see also Faure, *Raging Gods*.

[74] *T.* 76, 2410, 519c1-12.

[75] For more on these five sectors of the Vajra realm mandala, each of which corresponds with a particular direction and Buddha, see ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, 33-57.

course, there is also a clear though unarticulated link here in that all three—Benzaiten, the dragon girl, and Nyoirin—are famed for the powers of their *cintāmaṇi*. There is a play here then on both "south" and "jewel," as the two motifs converge to produce a set of associations that we find echoed in several other places later in the text.

A passage that appears a little further along, entitled "Secrets of Benzaiten," makes the jewel link among the south-dwelling Ratnasambhava, the dragon girl, and Nyoirin more explicit:

> Item. On the matter of the dragon girl customarily [identified as] Benzaiten, a teaching says: The dragon girl is Nyoirin Kannon. This worthy's original form is also Nyoirin. Moreover, they are customarily [identified as] one body. Also, the dragon girl takes the jewel to be the dharma gate of self-realization [J. *jishō*]. This worthy also takes the jewel to be her *samaya* form. Also related to this worthy is the matter of the three bodies customarily [taken to be one]: the worthy Ratnasambhava of the southern direction is the dharma body [J. *hōshin* 法身, Sk. *dharmakaya*]. Nyoirin Kannon is the reward body [J. *hōjin* 報身, Sk. *saṃbhoghakāya*]. The dragon girl is the manifested body [J. *ōjin* 應身, Sk. *nirmāṇakāya*]. These three bodies together take the *cintāmaṇi* as their *samaya* form.[76]

This passage plays of course with the classic Buddhist doctrine of the "three bodies" of the Buddha—here casting Ratnasambhava as the "dharma body" or embodiment of the Absolute, Nyoirin as the "reward body" created through actions, and the dragon girl as the "manifested body" that appears in the human world to lead sentient beings to enlightenment. The three are linked just as the "three bodies" of the Buddha are,

---

[76] *T.* 76, 2410, 622b11-17. This passage is echoed almost verbatim later in the text, in *T.* 76, 2410, 863c18-22.

differing only in level or type of manifestation, and ranked from highest to lowest, from the transcendent dharma-body to the body that dwells in paradise, to the body that takes human form. Here the text states specifically that the jewel as *samaya* form is the element that the three share in common, making them "one." It also casts their relationship in hierarchical terms, with the dragon girl appearing in the mundane, unenlightened world, and Nyoirin belonging to a higher realm, both emanations of the original Ratnasambhava (who, as a Buddha, is of course conceived of as male).

A third passage in the *Keiran shūyōshū* that deals with similar themes appears in a section called "Benzaiten engi" 辨才天縁起, or "The Miraculous Origins of Benzaiten." The entire text of the "Engi" seems to confirm Benzaiten's importance in the pantheon of *kami* worshipped on Mt. Hiei, revealing among other things that she is the mother of Ōnamuchi, and affirming that Buddhist teachings on Mt. Hiei flourish because she dwells on the numinous island of Chikubushima nearby.[77] Such statements suggest that Benzaiten's presence on Chikubushima—or perhaps it is the presence of Ugajin that likely preceded her arrival on both the island and the mountain—lends a power and authority to the Hie shrine complex that suggests an old cult on the site, into which this Buddhist tradition is eager to tap. I would suggest that in the Heian period the worship of Ugajin, and Uga-Benzaiten with her wish-fulfilling jewel, in this area converged with belief in the power of the *cintāmaṇi* (relic) to grant imperial legitimacy, and the combination of the two here casts Benzaiten in the role of an illustrious ancestor for the *kami* of Mt. Hiei that is analogous to Amaterasu for the imperial family. This speculation is all the more tempting when we consider that throughout this text Nyoirin

---

[77] See *T.* 76, 2410, 624c3-628c7.

is identified with both Amaterasu-Inari and Benzaiten, and thus in Nyoirin—recognizable most of all because of her attribute of the wish-fulfilling jewel—their power and authority converge, producing an often-feminine figure that could endow monks or sovereigns with both indigenous local authority and orthodox Buddhist legitimacy.

Indeed, another fascinating connection that shows up in the "Benzaiten engi" brings us back to our original inquiry about Nyoirin manifested in the form of Inari or Dakiniten. As we saw earlier, the grain deity Ugajin may appear in the form of a snake or a fox, and through the structural logic of association we have seen in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, dragon jewels and fox jewels also converge. In the very first passage we looked at we encountered the image of a three-pointed jewel, linked to the three-pointed shape associated with the element of fire. A similar image emerges here, when the text mentions that Benzaiten dwells at three sites in Japan—Tengawa 天川, Itsukushima 厳島, and Chikubushima—and each is correlated with Jizō 地蔵 (Ch. Dizang, Sk. Kṣitigarbha), Myōon, and Kannon, respectively.[78] It states: "The three caves at Tengawa, Itsukushima, and Chikubushima mutually interpenetrate each other, and the three Ben[zaiten] jewels mutually fuse in one body."[79] This statement is accompanied by a drawing of three *cintāmaṇi* connected in a triangular form, inscribed upon each of which is the name of one of the three Benzaiten locations. This geographical map in the form of "three jewels," with Tengawa (which can also mean "Milky Way," and therefore in a visual play on words is located at the top of the triangle) exactly echoes

[78] Tengawa 天川 is located on the Kii peninsula, and Itsukushima in the southwestern part of Hiroshima Bay 広島湾, in the southern part of the Inland Sea (J. Seto naikai 瀬戸内海). Geographically, the three are located in a triangular relationship to one another.
[79] *T.* 76, 2410, 625a20-24.

the "three-pointed jewel" of the fox's tail, and the triangular fire form, suggesting that indeed there is a homology between Nyoirin's identification as Inari-Dakiniten-Amaterasu, and as Benzaiten.

This drawing is accompanied by a rather cryptic caption that reads: "[According to an] oral transmission, because she deeply enters into meditation [J. *zenjō* 禪定, Sk. *dhyāna*], she dwells in the very depth of the great sea. It also says: Because Ben[zaiten] appears to manifest the fruits of Buddhahood, she dwells on the peak of the high mountain."[80] This statement may partly reflect the local belief that Benzaiten dwells on the island of Chikubushima, while the dragon god dwells in the depths of Lake Biwa. A passage that follows a few lines later further clarifies that this "dragon" is identified with the dragon girl of the Lotus Sutra:

> Chikubushima is a manifestation of coming out of the great sea to Vulture Peak. Nyoirin Kannon of Ishiyama manifests her attainment of buddhahood in the [realm of] non-defilement in the south. Benzaiten is a transformation of Nyoirin. Thus, with the inner realization of the jewel *samaya*, [she] arrives at Vulture Peak. Think deeply on this matter.[81]

The text states clearly that Benzaiten is a transformation of Nyoirin. At the same time, Nyoirin's jewel is equated with the jewels of both Benzaiten and the dragon girl—with animal nature, wish-fulfillment, and the inexhaustible power of enlightenment all at once. Elsewhere in the text we find echoes of this same image of Benzaiten-as-dragon-girl ascending from bottom of the sea to the top of the mountain, from the deepest

---

[80] *T.* 76, 2410, 625b1-7.
[81] *T.* 76, 2410, 625c13-17.

depths to the highest heights. Such an image suggests the dual nature of water deities like Benzaiten and the dragon girl. The dragon girl, a lowly creature, a mere young female animal, ascended from the depths of the sea to Vulture Peak to attain enlightenment before Śākyamuni. Both depths and heights suggest enlightenment, but at the same time moving from "depths" to "heights" represents an instantaneous ascent from ignorance to enlightenment, or in classic Tendai "innate enlightenment" fashion, the paradoxical identification of the two.

What we have seen, then, is that Nyoirin is identified with Benzaiten and the dragon girl of the Lotus Sutra, through the "three-pointed" symbolism that resonates with the text's descriptions of Nyoirin as Inari-Dakiniten; and I would suggest that to some degree these particular esoteric maneuvers in the *Keiran shūyōshū* represent an elaborate act of "doctrinalization," a dressing-up of old, local beliefs in esoteric Buddhist garb. Perhaps it was through the worship of the deity Ugajin—identified at times with Inari, and like her, one aspect of whom is a grain deity—that these dragon and fox deities came together and merged in the Tendai esoteric tradition. Imperial legitimacy may have needed confirmation not only from the possession of Buddha relics, but also from the power of these indigenous cults. Here again we find Nyoirin emerging as a kind of mask, a figure who is often female, human-looking on the outside but with a the nature of a serpent or fox on the inside, driven by the power of both animal and enlightened nature, and by the authority of local *kami* in all their mythic purity and worldly power. So our identifications lead us in a circle, in which foxes and dragons transform into each other, guarding the relic-jewel that the sovereign needed to survive.

Nyoirin, Prince Shōtoku, and the Rokkakudō

Until now we have traced two patterns of association with female deities that emerge around Nyoirin Kannon in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, the complexes of Nyoirin-Inari-Amaterasu and Nyoirin-Benzaiten-dragon girl. Now I want to look at another important pattern that appears not only in this text but elsewhere in the Tendai tradition beginning in the Heian period, which confirms Nyoirin's reputation as a granter of political power to sovereigns, or perhaps even as a sovereign herself, and that is Nyoirin's association with Prince Shōtoku, Japan's first great patron, and patron saint, of Buddhism, and its first genuine home-grown *cakravartin*. A devout Buddhist, Shōtoku ascended to the position of crown prince with the coronation of Empress Suiko (554-628, r. 592-628), for whom he served as regent. Shōtoku is credited with having founded many temples, including the Nara temple of Hōryūji 法隆寺 in 607; Shitennōji 四天王寺, located in present-day Osaka, by 623; and according to legend the Rokkakudō (the popular name for the temple Chōhōji 頂法寺) in Kyoto, where he is said to have enshrined his own personal Nyoirin icon as the main deity. The Rokkakudō is also the place where Shinran dreamed his famous dream of Kannon while on retreat there. A brief examination of Shōtoku's links to Nyoirin Kannon in the *Keiran shūyōshū* can help us better understand Nyoirin's role as a protector of the sovereign and nation.

Let us begin with a key passage in the *Keiran shūyōshū,* the first of two oral transmissions recorded in this text that refer to Shōtoku's connection with Nyoirin[82]:

---

[82] *T.* 7, 2410, 789b29-c6.

Shōtoku Taishi is a reincarnation of Amaterasu. The *Miraiki* 未来記[83] says: "In the degenerate age [J. *masse* 末世] [I will appear] according to circumstances in the world, as the sovereign Shōmu, Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師 [Kūkai], [and] Shōbō." And so forth. According to this Ono way, because it was transmitted by Shōbō,[84] it takes Nyoirin to be the main deity of the Jūhachidō.[85] This is because Shōbō is customarily [identified as] Mahāvairocana. This Guse Kannon, in the esoteric scriptures, is not seen in [his/her] collective [form]. The collective body of the six Kannon is known as Guse Kannon. Among the six Kannon, Nyoirin is the original [one].

In the next few lines, this item describes a secret transmission about how Shōtoku allegedly created an image of Guse Kannon at Shitennōji that was really an image of Nyoirin. In the passage above, the text draws on elements of a belief that, by the early thirteenth century, had already gained a wide circulation—that Shōtoku himself was an incarnation of Nyoirin Kannon. As usual, the text prefers not to state this popular idea straightforwardly, but instead departs into a realm of complex and ever-expanding associations among deities and historical figures. This item opens with the statement that Shōtoku is a reincarnation of Amaterasu, and then goes on to say that according to

[83] The *Miraiki*, literally "Record of the Future," is a prophetic text falsely attributed to Shōtoku in the form of Guse Kannon, now lost but cited in various works from the medieval period, including the *Kojidan* 古事談, *Gukanshō* 愚管抄, *Taiheiki* 太平記, *Heike Monogatari* 平家物語, and others. It belongs to a broader genre of apocryphal works titled *Miraiki* that began to appear from the late Heian period onward, no doubt linked to a widespread sense that the world had entered the degenerate "last age" (J. *mappō* 末法 or *masse* 末世).

[84] Here and in the following use of his name, "Shōbō" is spelled with the characters "holy dharma" 聖法 instead of "holy jewel" 聖宝, but the text is obviously referring to the patriarch Shōbō throughout this passage.

[85] The *Jūhachidō shidai* 十八道次第 is the initial practice that novice Shingon monks receive, in which a series of eighteen rituals are performed employing eighteen different types of *mudrā*. It is the first of the four practices known as *shido kegyō* 四度加行; the other three are Kongōkai 金剛界, Taizōkai 胎蔵界, and Fudō gomahō 不動護摩法. Most branches of the Ono school enshrine Nyoirin Kannon as the main deity in this series of rituals, while the Hirosawa school enshrines Mahāvairocana.

the apocryphal *Miraiki*, attributed to Shōtoku, he prophesies that he will appear in a later, degenerate age in various forms to help guide sentient beings to enlightenment, including those of the sovereign Shōmu, Kūkai, and Shōbō.[86] Shōbō, in turn, propagated the Ono way that takes Nyoirin Kannon as the main deity in the Jūhachidō. Shōbō is none other than Mahāvairocana, the deity enshrined in other schools' version of the same rituals; though the logic is a bit convoluted, this identification alludes to the parallel between Nyoirin and Mahāvairocana, the two deities enshrined as *honzon* in these rites. Then, "Guse Kannon" is said to be the collective body of the six Kannon, among which Nyoirin is the "original" one. Though the text does not mention it explicitly, by this time Shōtoku was widely seen as an incarnation of a figure called Guse Kannon, who is here equated with Nyoirin.

The implicit logic here is that Shōtoku = Guse Kannon = Six Kannon = Nyoirin. Our earlier study of Nyoirin's various manifestations in this text as Amaterasu, and the fact that Shōtoku is here also said to be an incarnation of Amaterasu, lends further credence to the belief in Shōtoku as Nyoirin reflected in this passage of text. We also see here that Shōtoku is at once a manifestation of Nyoirin and a devotee, as was often the case; we have seen other examples, as in the cases of Shōbō, Ryōgen, and Murasaki Shikibu, where the devotee comes to be seen as an incarnation of Nyoirin, a phenomenon that is not surprising given that identification with one's object of devotion is a central element of esoteric Buddhist ritual. The widespread deification of Shōtoku that arose during the Heian period was thus closely bound up with his identity with both Nyoirin and Guse Kannon.

---

[86] Indeed, by this time in Japan Shōbō was believed to be an incarnation of both Shōtoku and Nyoirin.

When did this identification of Shōtoku with Nyoirin occur? One clue can be found in the thirteenth-century Taimitsu text *Asabashō*, which predates the *Keiran shūyōshū* by about a century, and contains a prominently featured reference to Shōtoku as a manifestation of Nyoirin.[87] The *Asabashō* chapter on Nyoirin Kannon opens with several important pieces of related lore before moving on to the ritual and iconographic details of Nyoirin worship. It begins first with an explanation of the name "Nyoirin," which refers to the bodhisattva's attribute of a "wheel-jewel" with which all things are accomplished; the emphasis on the jewel *as wheel* here likely alludes to the "wheel-turning" Buddhist monarch or *cakravartin*. Next the text mentions that Nyoirin is enshrined in the *sandan mishihō* rites held in the Futama that we considered earlier in this chapter; following this item, it refers to a "private document" (J. *shian* 私案) that states that Shōtoku is none other than a reincarnation of [Nyoirin] Kannon, who has been his protector "for seven lifetimes." A parenthetical statement says: "This is the Rokkakudō Kannon." We will return to the subject of the Rokkakudō Nyoirin shortly.

Clearly, then, the Shōtoku-Nyoirin connection was already known in the Tendai tradition by the thirteenth century, if not earlier. Indeed, the notion that Shōtoku was an incarnation of Kannon, according to the scholar Fujii Yukiko 藤井由紀子, probably first arose within the Tendai tradition, which early on employed Shōtoku's image as one means of legitimizing itself as an independent sect.[88] Fujii suggests that the core Tendai belief expressed in the Lotus Sutra—which by the medieval period had become hugely popular in Japan—in cosmic savior bodhisattvas gave rise in turn to this belief in the

[87] *T. Zuzō* 9, 3190, 194b1-13.
[88] See Fujii Yukiko 藤井由紀子, *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō* 聖徳太子の伝承 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1999), 14-15.

divinity of Shōtoku Taishi as a bodhisattva. The notion of Shōtoku as Guse Kannon flourished in the Tendai sect throughout the medieval period, and still today the figure of "Guse Kannon" is enshrined at Shitennōji (as its main deity) as well as at Hōryūji, both of which have long had strong ties not only to Shōtoku but to the Tendai tradition.

While the *Asabashō* refers to Shōtoku as Nyoirin, the *Keiran shūyōshū* mentions "Guse Kannon," in relation to Shōtoku, as the collective embodiment of the six esoteric Kannon (of which Nyoirin is the "original" one). In fact, though, Guse Kannon has no distinct identity as a bodhisattva in Mahāyāna texts. The term *guse*, meanining "world savior" or "world-saving," does appear frequently in Mahāyāna texts as an epithet for buddhas or bodhisattvas in general, including Kannon. In Japan, however, beginning in the tenth century, the name gained currency mainly as a manifestation of Shōtoku Taishi as world-saving bodhisattva.[89]

The tenth-century legendary account of Shōtoku's life, the *Shōtoku Taishi denryaku* 聖徳太子傳暦, is the earliest text to explicitly identify Shōtoku as an incarnation of Guse Kannon. According to an episode recorded in this text, Shōtoku's mother, an imperial consort, dreams one night of a golden monk who comes to her and says he is "Guse Bosatsu" (World-Saving Bodhisattva), who has vowed to save the world. The monk then enters her womb through her mouth, and after this auspicious dream she becomes pregnant with Shōtoku.[90] As Fujii points out, the fact that the text says the monk's house is "in the west" suggests that this bodhisattva is none other than Kannon, who is traditionally believed to be one of Amida Buddha's attendants in his

---

[89] Ibid., 27-29. See also Fujii Yukiko 藤井由紀子, "Guse Kannon no seiritsu—reikenka sareta Shōtoku Taishi"「救世観音」の成立—霊験化された聖徳太子 in Ōyama Seiichi 大山誠一, ed., *Shōtoku Taishi no shinjitsu* 聖徳太子の真実 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2003).
[90] Fujii, "Guse Kannon no seiritsu," 319.

western Pure Land paradise. The term "Guse" is found in other Shōtoku texts, but it is in the *Denryaku* that this word appears as the name of the bodhisattva who manifests himself as Shōtoku. Fujii notes that the compound *guse* also occurs in official documents from the Heian period, beginning in the ninth century, in connection with the monks and nuns who performed rites for national protection in nationally sponsored branch temples all over Japan (J. *kokubunji* 国分寺), and she suggests that the term's connotation of the Buddhist power of national protection has much to do with its links to Shōtoku.[91]

As we saw, the *Asabashō* reference to Shōtoku also mentions that Nyoirin has been his main deity, or *honzon*, for seven lifetimes, and that this particular Nyoirin is the same one that is enshrined in the Rokkakudō. The likely source of this idea is the *Rokkakudō engi* 六角堂縁起, which dates at least to the early Kamakura period and tells of Shōtoku's legendary founding of this temple.[92] This fascinating text first recounts how Shōtoku discovers a Korean-style box that has washed up inside a sea cave in Awaji no Kuni, and inside it is an icon of Nyoirin Kannon, which he takes as his personal object of devotion (J. *jibutsu* 持佛).[93] Later, during a battle with Mononobe no Moriya 物部守屋 (?-587), he vows that if he wins the battle he will begin the

---

[91] Ibid., 326-9.
[92] *DNBZ* 117, 129. Fujii also discusses the *Rokkakudō engi* in *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō*, 94-97. The text exists not independently but as part of the *Shoji engi shū* 諸寺縁起集, of which one extant manuscript dates to 1207.
[93] The icon enshrined at the Rokkakudō today, a *hibutsu*, is said to have been Shōtoku's private object of devotion, and measures only 5.5 centimeters in height. Awaji no Kuni 淡路の国 is located in what is today Hyōgo prefecture, which lies to the west of Kyoto and borders on the Sea of Japan. The text uses the term *iwanya no umi* 巌屋海, and here again we see Kannon traditionally associated with water and caves. Shōtoku finding a Korean-style box in the cave suggests even that the box may have come from Korea (though in Japan, through the medieval period, such boxes were frequently used to transport objects). This type of lidded box, called a *karabitsu* 韓櫃, "Korean box," has four or six legs, as opposed to the legless Japanese style box, *yamatobitsu* 和櫃; both types may be made of unvarnished or lacquered wood, and are sometimes decorated with mother-of-pearl or gold lacquer.

construction of Shitennōji the following morning.[94] He does win, and so in fulfillment of his vow he sets off to gather lumber for the temple's construction on a wooded mountainside near Kyoto. He places the image of Nyoirin in the shadow of a *tāla* tree, where he bathes it with water, and after bathing it he tries to move it but it will not budge. Thinking this strange, Shōtoku prays and then has a dream in which Nyoirin appears to him and tells him that she has already been his personal guardian deity for his past seven lifetimes, and that she now wishes to remain in this place to bring benefit to sentient beings. Shōtoku therefore decides to build a small hall on this spot. Then an old woman appears, and Shōtoku asks her about the best way to obtain lumber right away. The woman tells him about a nearby cryptomeria tree upon which a purple cloud descends every morning. The next morning he cuts down the magical tree, and with the wood of this single tree he builds the Rokkakudō. The text goes on to describe miraculous events surrounding the Rokkakudō at a later period, once the capital has been moved to Kyoto. On one occasion, during the construction of the new capital, a temple construction worker is marking out the path of a small road, right in the middle of which stands the Rokkakudō. Just at the moment he decides the hall must be torn down and moved to another location, the Rokkakudō moves by itself about fifteen meters to the north, and thus escapes being demolished and rebuilt.[95]

Clearly, this story shares many elements with other legends we have seen surrounding Nyoirin Kannon. The theme of the icon's capricious refusal to move, as well as the temple itself magically moving out of the way of construction, remind us of

---

[94] As Fujii notes, thought most of the *Rokkakudō engi* cannot be taken as historical fact, Shōtoku's battle with Mononobe no Moriya is recorded in the *Nihon shoki* 日本書記, as is his historic vow during the battle to build Shitennōji if he is victorious. Fujii, *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō,* 97.

[95] The image moves five *jō*, and one *jō* is equivalent to about 3.03 meters.

the founding legends of both Ishiyamadera and Daigoji, in which Nyoirin icons stick fast to one place where they wish to remain, or slip out of the halls in which they are originally placed. Also, just as in the Ishiyamadera tale that appears in both the *Sanboe kotoba* and *Ishiyamadera engi*, Nyoirin plays a part the construction of another temple. While in that story prayers to Nyoirin result in the discovery of the gold needed to complete the construction of Tōdaiji, and also lead to the construction of Ishiyamadera, here it is in the course of seeking wood for Shitennōji, said to be the first Buddhist temple in Japan, that Shōtoku discovers his icon's magical properties and then constructs the original Rokkakudō to house it. An old person—in the case of the *Daigoji engi* and Ishiyamadera tale a man, in this case a woman—appears in the role of local guardian or earth god, and gives local advice. Of course, since this tale probably took shape during the Heian period, it tells us more about the legends circulating by then around Shōtoku and Nyoirin than about events that took place in Shōtoku's time; and legend aside, the Rokkakudō is believed to have been founded not when Shōtoku lived but sometime in the mid-Heian period.[96]

Above all, the text makes clear that Shōtoku's connection to Nyoirin is old and mysterious, in fact that it goes back "seven lifetimes." The *Asabashō* echoes this aspect of Shōtoku's link to Nyoirin, as it mentions that Nyoirin was Shōtoku's main deity for seven lifetimes, and that this Nyoirin is none other than the one enshrined in the

[96] Fujii, *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō*, 96-99. According to Fujii, the oldest extant document that mentions Shōtoku's connection to the Rokkakudō engi is an episode about a fire in 1143, from which the Nyoirin icon was safely rescued, in Fujiwara no Michinori's 藤原通憲 (?-1159) *Honchō seiki* 本朝世紀, which dates to 1150-1159. She also notes that the earliest mention of the Rokkakudō in any document appears in an entry dated 1018 in Fujiwara no Sanesuke's *Shōyūki*.

Rokkakudō.[97] The *Ishiyamadera engi* also makes reference to this tradition in its opening lines, though it states that Nyoirin was Shōtoku's *honzon* for only two lifetimes, rather than seven.[98] The famous legend that Shōtoku, at the age of two, chanted the Buddha's name and spontaneously produced a small relic of the Buddha also must have contributed to his association with Nyoirin. Though many factors no doubt converged to give rise to this Shōtoku-Nyoirin identification that appeared sometime during the Heian period, it serves as further evidence for the degree to which Nyoirin had emerged by then in the role of a national protector deity, and also likely augmented it. Fujii further suggests that the fact that Enryakuji enshrined Nyoirin as the main deity in the *sandan mishihō* rites held in the Futama for the protection of the nation may have had something to do with Nyoirin's links to Shōtoku in the Tendai tradition.[99]

Given Shōtoku's connection to the Rokkakudō, it is worth noting that the *Keiran shūyōshū* also draws on this body of lore in the only other major passage that touches upon Shōtoku's connection to Nyoirin. This item mentions Nyoirin Kannon as the main deity not only of the Rokkakudō, but also of two other temples, the Tsubakidō 椿堂 (Camellia Hall), a temple at Enryakuji on Mt. Hiei, and Ishiyamadera. The text says that according to a source that seems to be now lost, called the *Shōtoku Taishi shichishō honzon santai ji ki* 聖徳太子七生本尊三體事記, the Rokkakudō Nyoirin is the "golden six-armed Nyoirin," while the main deity of the Tsubakidō is the "silver four-armed Nyoirin," and the main deity of Ishiyamadera is the "sandalwood two-armed Nyoirin."

---

[97] *T. Zuzō* 9, 3190, 194b12-13.
[98] *DNBZ* 117, 179a.
[99] Fujii, *Shōtoku taishi no denshō*, 113-15.

All three, the text specifies, are three *sun* in height.[100] It also relates the legend of how Shōtoku was out walking with a walking stick made of camellia wood, which he stuck into the ground and which then grew by itself, and became (or perhaps whose wood was used to build) Camellia Hall.[101]

What is compelling about this passage is that it intentionally links three sites of Nyoirin worship—the Rokkakudō, Tsubakidō, and Ishiyamadera. By the fourteenth century, the Rokkakudō and Ishiyamadera had become two of the most famous Nyoirin pilgrimage sites in Japan. Although the *Asabashō* says that the Rokkakudō's main deity was the two-armed Nyoirin, later the Rokkakudō was indeed said to house a six-armed Nyoirin as its *hibutsu* main deity, and as we have already seen, Ishiyamadera has long been known for enshrining a two-armed Nyoirin.[102] Though not as prominent a site of Nyoirin worship, the Tsubakidō was located at Enryakuji, and its link to these other two powerful sites reinforces the idea that this tradition was much interested in connecting itself to powerful places.[103]

As we can see, then, it was significant that Shinran had his famous dream of Kannon's promise to become his "jewel woman" while he was on retreat in the Rokkakudō. While Nyoirin is featured in the earlier *Kakuzen shō* version of the vision, however, it was actually Shōtoku who appeared to Shinran as Guse Kannon. By Shinran's time the Rokkakudō was well established as a temple founded by Shōtoku,

---

[100] That is, about ten centimeters.

[101] Today the hall houses the Thousand-Armed Kannon as its main deity.

[102] As was the case with the Ishiyamadera Nyoirin, before the main deity of the Rokkakudō was identified in the *Rokkakudō engi* as Nyoirin, the icon was identified in earlier documents merely as "Kannon," suggesting that the Nyoirin identification came later. Fujii, *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō*, 102-3.

[103] Fujii offers a lengthy discussion of the relationship between the two-armed Nyoirin of the Rokkakudō and Ishiyamadera, and the "Guse Kannon" enshrined at Shitennōji and Hōryūji 法隆寺, in which she suggests that belief in Guse (Shōtoku) as the two-armed Nyoirin flourished at these temples in medieval Japan. Ibid., 101-13.

and a holy site devoted to its main deity Nyoirin, to which worshippers of all social classes, male and female, came to pray. In one well-known instance, in 1178 Kenreimon'in 建礼門院 (1155-1213), empress to the sovereign Takakura 高倉 (1161-1181, r. 1168-1180), made prayer offerings to Nyoirin Kannon there when she was five months pregnant with the future sovereign Antoku 安徳 (1178-1185, r. 1180-1185), likely for the birth of a boy who would become crown prince, a wish that was fulfilled.[104] Thus when at the age of twenty-nine Shinran left Mt. Hiei and went on a hundred-day retreat at the Rokkakudō, and there had his life-changing dream on the ninety-fifth day, it was by no mere chance that he dreamed of Prince Shōtoku *as* Guse Kannon. Shinran was known to have worshipped the deified Shōtoku, because of his account of this dream as well as the hymns to Shōtoku that he composed later in his life.[105] Furthermore, in his dream the bodhisattva vows to come to him in the form of a jewel woman. "Even if you the practitioner violate women because of your past karma," the text, recorded by his disciple Shinbutsu 眞佛 (1209-1258), says, "I will become a jewel woman and be violated [by you]. All your life I will adorn you, and at the moment of death I will guide you to the Pure Land."[106] Nyoirin is not mentioned, but scholars have noted that the similarity between the wording of this dream and that of the *Kakuzen shō* passage with which we began this study indicates that the identification with Nyoirin was probably latent in Shinran's thoughts. Tanaka Takako has further argued that because the image of the "jewel woman" who grants desires of the flesh and

[104] Ibid., 115-16.
[105] Ibid., 125-27.
[106] Shinbutsu, *Shinran muki*, 201-2.

leads one to the Pure Land likely overlapped, in Shinran's own awareness, with the secret role filled on Mt. Hiei during the medieval period by child acolytes (J. *chigo* 稚児), and thus his vision of Shōtoku—who was often depicted visually as a young boy—may have converged with this kind of homoerotic image. Tanaka also points to the tendency in the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, after Shinran's death, to visually represent Shōtoku himself in a feminized way.[107]

In a broader sense, what we can glean from these passages that link Nyoirin with Shōtoku is a belief in Nyoirin as granter of political power and favor. In some cases Nyoirin appears directly to the (usually male) individual involved, while in other instances a woman's worship of Nyoirin results in the birth of desired male heirs. We have already seen a similar pattern not only in the case of the jewel woman, but also for example in that of the monk Dōkyō, who by the medieval period at least was believed to have practiced Nyoirin rites and thus gained favor with Empress Shōtoku, as well as the many examples of aristocrats praying to Nyoirin for male children.

This introductory section to the Nyoirin chapter of the *Asabashō* contains one further striking example of this political aspect of Nyoirin's wish-granting powers that is worth mentioning here. As we have seen, the chapter opens with mentions of Nyoirin as bearer of the "jewel wheel," as the main deity in the Futama rites, and manifested in the form of Shōtoku. Directly after these items, before it takes up technical ritual matters, the text relates an anecdote that sheds further light on Nyoirin's identity as it had by then developed in the Tendai tradition. In this incident, Fujiwara no Kaneie's

[107] Tanaka,"'Gyokujo' no no seiritsu to genkai," 111-12. The Sannō deity Jūzenji is also represented as a *chigo*, and is often confused with Shōtoku.

second daughter Senshi gives birth in 980 (Tengen 天元 3) to a son that later becomes the young sovereign Ichijō, successor to the sovereign Kazan 花山 (r. 984-986, 968-1008), presumably (though the text does not state it explicitly) as a result of rites dedicated to Nyoirin.[108] Four years after this auspicious birth, in 984, Kaneie again holds rites dedicated to Nyoirin at the temple Gangyōji 元慶寺, and he and his daughter stay at the Tendai abbot Ryōgen's quarters at the monastery. In a discussion of this incident, Paul Groner has noted that this would have made it possible for Senshi herself to attend the ritual, while she would not have been allowed to had it been conducted on Mt. Hiei. On this occasion, the main Nyoirin image for the rite cannot be found, and Ryōgen says that it is in the scripture repository; when one of the monks checks there, however, he does not find it, but later that night he returns and the image is there, standing on top of a small shrine.[109] Everyone marvels at this wondrous event; but even more importantly, as a result of the Nyoirin rites that are then conducted, that same year Senshi's son becomes the crown prince, and two years later, in 986, the sovereign Kazan abdicates the throne (possibly having been tricked into doing so by Kaneie and his sons, according to other accounts), Ichijō is enthroned, and Kaneie—as his grandfather—is appointed regent. Thus at last, due to Nyoirin's power, Kaneie defeats

[108] *T. Zuzō* 9, 3190, 194b14-29. Curiously, the passage opens with the name of the sovereign Suzaku, but this appears to be a mistake, as the events related show clearly that it is actually about the sovereigns Kazan and Ichijō. Kaneie's devotion to Nyoirin here is also interesting in light of an incident discussed earlier in this dissertation, recorded in the *Ishiyamadera engi*, in which Kaneie's wife, the famous diarist Fujiwara no Michitsuna no Haha, goes to Ishiyamadera to pray that their relationship will improve, which it does as a result of Nyoirin's wondrous power.

[109] I follow Paul Groner's discussion of this passage, which can be found in *Ryōgen and Mt. Hiei: Japanese Tendai in the Tenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 228 and 428 n. 24 and 25. See also Fujii, *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō*, 115.

his Fujiwara rivals at court, and not only his grandson but also he himself ascend to become the rulers of the land.

In this particular instance, as in the case of Kenreimon'in at the Rokkakudō, we have a story that involves the prayers and involvement of women in Nyoirin worship, but only to the end that they serve the greater interests of the male politicians who control them. Though women also seem to have worshipped Nyoirin for their own purposes, as in the case of Kaneie's wife Fujiwara Michitsuna no Haha or the wife of the official Fujiwara Kuniyoshi at Ishiyamadera, this pattern of women worshipping Nyoirin to fulfill their function as producers of male heirs to political power was probably more common during the late Heian and Kamakura periods.

Incidentally, the involvement of Ryōgen, the gifted administrator who is known as the tenth-century restorer of the Tendai tradition on Mt. Hiei, is no accident. Ryōgen is famed for having rebuilt most of the temple complex after a great fire, and he also solidified ties between the Tendai establishment and the Fujiwara clan, to the lasting benefit of Enryakuji. He was known for his devotion to Nyoirin, partly because of this very event involving Kaneie, and eventually he himself (like Shōbō) came to be seen as an incarnation of Nyoirin.[110] Clearly, Nyoirin may have worked her magic to help not only Ryōgen's aristocratic patron Kaneie but also the abbot himself to rise to the remarkable level of worldly influence he achieved.

The placement of this anecdote next to the text's mention of Nyoirin as Shōtoku reaffirms a belief in Nyoirin's power as a granter of political power. Yet this was not merely due to her possession of the jewel that converged with belief in relics identified

[110] See Groner, *Ryōgen and Mt. Hiei*, 290 and 446 n. 10; 292 and 447 n. 19 and 20.

with imperial regalia. As our investigation of these three patterns in the *Keiran shūyōshū* has shown, Nyoirin's ties with Shōtoku reflect one strand of the beliefs that surrounded her in the Tendai tradition. Officially she was the "original form" of Amaterasu, but at the same time her links with the likes of Benzaiten and Dakiniten, water deities and fox deities that combined Indian and indigenous beliefs, suggests that the source of that power may have been darker, more liminal, and closer to home than one might initially suspect. Nyoirin Kannon was no mere orthodox relic-bearing deity used to protect and justify the nation. Her figure also converged with local beliefs in serpent and fox deities, with food gods and all their life-giving power.

Nyoirin, savior of women from the "Blood Pool Hell"

Until now, in this chapter, we have traced some of Nyoirin's most important manifestations in the *Keiran shūyōshū* and broader Tendai esoteric tradition, and as we consider Nyoirin's connection to female devotees in this tradition, it is worth mentioning one last Tendai-influenced popular form in which Nyoirin emerged—as the savior of women from the "Blood Pool Hell" believed to await them after death. By the Muromachi period visual depictions of Nyoirin in her six-armed (or more rarely, two-armed) form appear in mandalas depicting the horrors of various Buddhist hells, in which she calmly presides from a lotus pedestal over a scene of desperate women submerged in a lake of blood, whom presumably she has vowed to save. To my knowledge, no textual sources document Nyoirin's role as the savior of women from

this hell, and how she got there is an intriguing question that may have something to do with her various female identities, and worship by women, in the Tendai tradition.

This belief in the Blood Pool Hell can be traced to the *Ketsubon kyō* 血盆經 (Blood Bowl Sutra), a short, apocryphal text that exists in many versions, probably appeared in China in the late twelfth century, and was circulating in Japan by the mid-Muromachi period.[111] The text delves into the horrors believed to await women after death because of the blood of childbirth and (in some versions) menstruation, and though it names no savior deity to whom women can appeal for help, the Buddha offers ritual instructions, as well as in some versions prayers and *dhāraṇī* that can be recited to free women from this fate; in fact, the physical text itself came to be seen as a talisman that could have much the same effect.[112] In one narrative version of the text, the arhat Mulian 木蓮 (J. Mokuren, Sk. Maudgalyāyana) sees women submerged in a lake of blood, forced to drink the blood or they are beaten with metal rods.[113] He asks the demon in charge of this hell why the women are suffering this punishment, and is told that they have polluted the earth deity because of the blood shed during childbirth, and because the women have washed their garments in river water used to make tea for holy

---

[111] *Foshuo dacang zhengjiao xiepen jing* 佛說大藏正教血盆經 (J. *Bussetsu daizō shōkyō ketsubon kyō*), *DNZ* 87, 4:2999. For studies of this sutra, see Takemi Momoko. "Menstruation Sutra Belief in Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 10, nos. 2-3 (1983): 229-46. Takemi has identified sixteen different versions of the text, and notes that it had gained widespread circulation in China by the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). See also Michel Soymié, *Dōkyō kenkyū* 道鏡研究, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shōshinsha, 1965); and Gōrai Shigeru 五来重, *Gangōji Gokurakubō chūsei shomin shinkō shiryō no kenkyū* 元興寺極楽坊中世庶民信仰資料の研究 (Tokyo: Hozōkan, 1964). Scholars debate the date of the text's introduction into Japan, but it likely occurred sometime between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

[112] See D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 181-231, and on this text as talisman, 228-29.

[113] Mulian is famed as the arhat who saves his mother from hell in a number of works that became popular in East Asia, such as the *Yulanpen jing* 盂蘭盆經, J. *Urabon kyō*, *T.* 16, 685. See Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

men. In some versions of the sutra he sees his own mother in this hell and seeks to save her. Mulian then magically transports himself to the Buddha, who teaches him certain methods for saving the women from hell, including rituals, offerings, and spells. In none of its versions does the text mention any particular deity who is believed to save women from this hell, so it is intriguing that by the Muromachi period Nyoirin—as well as Jizō in some cases—is depicted as the saving deity in many images inspired by these texts. Nyoirin appears particularly in those used for didactic purposes by the so-called Kumano *etoki bikuni* 絵解き比丘尼, itinerant "picture-reciting nuns."[114] These nuns, who were active from the Muromachi into the Edo periods, often used paintings called *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara* 熊野觀心十界曼荼羅 (Kumano Heart Visualization Ten World Mandala) to preach to other women about the hells that awaited them, and the need for Buddhist salvation. In some images Nyoirin presides serenely over the women submerged in a pool of blood, as they press their palms together in supplication to her; in one, Nyoirin hands a woman a one-page document, likely the talismanic *Ketsubon kyō* itself.[115]

Why might Nyoirin be cast in this role as savior of women? One of the most obvious clues lies in the fact that aristocratic women had long made pilgrimages to Kumano, and that Nyoirin has a deep connection with Kumano and the Nachi 那智

[114] For a study of the *etoki bikuni* and other itinerant Kumano nuns, see Barbara Ruch, "Woman to Woman: *Kumano bikuni* Proselytizers in Medieval and Early Modern Japan," in Barbara Ruch, ed., *Engendering Faith* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002), 537-80. See also Miyata Noboru 宮田登, "Sōron—minoku shūkyō no naka no ketsue kan" 総論—民俗宗教の中の血汚観, and Kuroda Hideo 黒田日出男, "Kumano kanjin jukkai mandara no uchū" 熊野勧心十界曼荼羅の宇宙, in Miyata Noboru, ed., *Sei to mibun—Jakusha, haisha no shōsei to hiun* 性と身分—弱者、敗者の聖性と悲運, *Bukkyō to nihonjin* 仏教と日本人 8 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1989), 3-37 and 207-72.
[115] Ruch, "*Kumano bikuni*," 573-4 and figs. 20-22.

shrine there.[116] Perhaps it is significant that these images arose in the Kumano tradition, which had strong Tendai roots, and in which, as we have seen, Nyoirin had come to play a crucial role. The three shrines of Hongū 本宮, Shingū 新宮, and Nachi at Kumano, famed as pilgrimage sites throughout the Heian period, are located in the southernmost part of the Kii 紀伊 peninsula, and since the late eleventh century have been affiliated with the Jimon 寺門 branch of Tendai based at Onjōji 園城寺 (or Miidera), Enryakuji's immediate neighbor and rival for sectarian power. Since the Nara period Kumano has also been a site favored by mountain ascetics, within whose tradition (later known as Shūgendō) Nyoirin also became important. Like other major Kannon sites, Kumano was a favorite pilgrimage destination for women throughout the Heian period. Barbara Ruch has noted that since 1435 or earlier Nyoirin was enshrined as the main deity at the Tendai temple Seigantoji 青岸渡寺, which has been linked since the twelfth century with the Nachi shrine, and the Kumano nuns may well have incorporated this belief in Nyoirin into their didactic and fundraising activities.[117]

Offering a different theory, in an essay that delves into this question, Kodate Naomi 高達奈緒美 suggests that in these images Nyoirin should be read not as an individual savior deity, but rather according to Tendai tradition as the embodiment of the six esoteric Kannon, whose work of salvation corresponds with the six paths of existence, embodied in the six arms of Nyoirin.[118] The notion of the six Kannon infiltrating the six worlds to save beings there, and of the six-armed Nyoirin as the

---

[116] On women's practices and Kumano, see Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 181-231.
[117] Ruch, "Woman to Woman," 573.
[118] Kodate Naomi 高達奈緒美, "Chi no ike jigoku no esō o meguru kakusho—kyūsaisha toshite no Nyoirin Kannon to mondai o chūshin ni" 血の池地獄の絵相をめぐる覚書—救済者としての如意輪観音の問題を中心に, in Sakamoto Kaname 坂本要, ed., *Jigoku no sekai* 地獄の世界 (Tokyo: Keisuisha, 1991), 667-90.

embodiment of the six Kannon, was widespread in both Tendai and Shingon in medieval Japan, and as we have already seen this idea is elaborated in the *Keiran shūyōshū*.[119] At the same time, Kodate notes various examples of women's devotion to Nyoirin, such as the *Kakuzen shō* rites concerning childbirth and love, the nun Nyoi in the *Genkō shakushō*, and so forth, suggesting that Nyoirin had already had special meaning for women as an object of devotion by the time these images appeared, which likely contributed to her being cast in this role of savior from the Blood Pool Hell.

All of these factors probably contributed to Nyoirin's appearance in this context. Certainly, as we have seen in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, Nyoirin's identity within the Tendai tradition had become both fluid and often feminine, merging with beliefs in local deities including Inari and Uga-Benzaiten. Nyoirin's importance in the Shugendō tradition also had much to do with her popularity at Kumano, long a site of mountain ascetic practice. At the same time, Nyoirin's jewel linked her with Jizō, the famed savior bodhisattva for the hell-bound, and another bearer of a *cintāmaṇi*; these jewels are also a common motif in Kumano amulets. Nyoirin's *nāga* and serpent associations could also have had something to do with her coming to preside over a pond in hell. Whatever the reasons, by the late Muromachi period Nyoirin had taken her place atop a lotus pedestal beside the "pool of blood" in hell, where women looked up to her beseechingly for help, and she promised them a way out. By the Muromachi period women thus no longer merely

[119] See *T.* 76, 2410, 587a19-b10. As we saw earlier in this study, Tendai's original notion of "Six Kannon" can be traced to Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*; but the Shingon belief in six esoteric Kannon, many of whose individual texts and images had already entered Japan during the Nara period, achieved great popularity and in turn inspired Tendai to establish its own version of the six esoteric Kannon. Significantly, however, in Tendai Juntei was replaced with Fukukenjaku Kannon, though the other five remained the same. The *Keiran shūyōshū* in fact gives a doctrinal rational for the Tendai rejection of Juntei, saying that this bodhisattva does not have a buddha in her crown and therefore cannot be one of the legitimate six esoteric Kannon. See T. 76, 2410, 584b-c.

prayed to Nyoirin for the male heirs they were supposed to have to further the aims of ambitious men, but had begun to pray to her for their own salvation, for help in solving their biggest problem of all, being born a woman in the first place.

Conclusion

When we think back to the image with which we began this inquiry, in which Nyoirin Kannon is identified with Inari in the form of the beautiful Seijo Gongen in the Tendai esoteric tradition, we can now say that we have gained at least a tantalizing glimpse into the world of buddha-*kami* pairing logic that lies behind it. We have seen that in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, and in the broader Tendai tradition, the figure of Nyoirin-Inari in fact opens out into a much larger network of linked associations. The motif of the *cintāmaṇi* connects Nyoirin not only with Inari, but with Amaterasu and some of the most important sites of imperial power in Japan—the shrines of Ise, the Futama in the imperial palace, and Amaterasu's mythic cave. In a related set of associations, the jewel also identifies Nyoirin with Uga-Benzaiten, a hybrid snake or dragon deity identified with the deity Ugajin. These two patterns of Nyoirin's convergence with female *kami* emerge repeatedly in the *Keiran shūyōshū*; but in a reiteration of Nyoirin's role as legitimizer of political power, the text links her to another "kami" as well, the deified Shōtoku and his Rokkakudō. Finally, we have seen that by the Muromachi period Nyoirin's feminine associations in Tendai likely helped to cast her, in the Kumano tradition, in the image of savior of women from the Blood Pool Hell.

As we have traced this complex series of developments, certain patterns have become evident that may help us clarify the reasons behind these transformations. 1) First, the *cintāmaṇi* served to catalyze Nyoirin's convergence with indigenous or hybrid deities; the process was also affected by geographical proximity. In all four cases we have looked at, the corresponding deities—Dakiniten, Benzaiten, Shōtoku, and the parallel Blood Pool Hell savior bodhisattva Jizō—all possess wish-fulfilling jewels. 2) The theme of Nyoirin as a symbol and bestower of political power, particularly in the case of her identification with Inari-Dakiniten and Shōtoku, is also linked to the *cintāmaṇi*-as-relic. 3) In direct relationship to this role, she first became an object of worship for women mainly because of male aspirations for male heirs, but by the Muromachi period had come to be worshipped by women for their own sakes. 4) At the same time, the Tendai esoteric tradition in the fourteenth century sought to "mandalize" Japan and thus secure its place at the center of this network of spiritual-temporal power. Let us look briefly at each of these factors.

First, as we saw in the earlier part of this dissertation, here again Nyoirin's jewel is one of the factors that links her to various indigenous or other Indian deities, including most notably those related to *nāga*—Seiryō Gongen, Benzaiten, the dragon girl, and even Inari-Dakiniten. While in the Ono tradition this process seems to have occurred spontaneously, as Nyoirin's jewel converged with the belief in *nāga* jewels and the relic of the imperial regalia, we have seen from the *Keiran shūyōshū* that by the fourteenth century, on Mt. Hiei and elsewhere, this proliferation of god identifications was taken up as a willful creative act. One example we have seen is the text's play on the threefold jewel image that links foxes, Inari, and Benzaiten. If in the Ono tradition

the jewel was conceived as a physical, miraculous object, here it is reduced to its semantic "form"; and indeed in Tendai the jewel tended to remain abstract and symbolic, rather than taking on a physical presence in a ritual context. Nyoirin's transformations arise from a contraction of the physical (jewel) into the word ("jewel"), where it is reimagined and then re-projected back out into the world, much as in the Tantric process of emanation and reabsorption in Indian thought.[120] That process provides a model with which we can also understand mythological development: an endless cycling back and forth of word into matter, matter into word. I would further suggest that it is when reduced to a word or name that a mythological element becomes most fertile, changeable, open to interpretation. Perhaps the *Keiran shūyōshū* reflects a tradition's periodic need to reduce myth to its semantic elements, so that it can be invented anew.

Even when the jewel is not cited explicitly as the linking element, because it characterizes Nyoirin as a deity of abundance and inexhaustible giving, this aspect of her character is easily identified with the cults of the deities Inari and Ugajin, or Uga-Benzaiten. Of course the oral traditions recorded in this text reflect ideas that were already in circulation by the fourteenth century, but it takes them up with a renewed vigor and transforms them into even more complex chains of association, whose ultimate result is to link the "local" Inari-Nyoirin with other powerful deities and the places where they dwell, thus creating a "mandala" at the center of which stands Mt. Hiei. In this sense Nyoirin and other deities serve in this tradition as pivots linking god

[120] See, for example, Andre Padoux, *Vac: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*, trans. Jacques Gontier (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

with god, place with place, not as an end but as a means to spin this web of esoteric power over all of Japan.

Of course, while on the one hand the *cintāmaṇi* connects Nyoirin with the beneficence of grain deities and protective *nāga* in this tradition, at the same time it also offers a clear link with the relic identified with the imperial regalia. Though it serves as a catalyst for femininity, there is nothing "feminine" about the jewel itself; certain other jewel-bearing deities, such as Jizō, were never drawn into webs of feminine deities as Nyoirin was.[121] As Tanaka has shown, Nyoirin's feminine nature contributed to her liminal power as a source of imperial legitimacy. This power was compounded by the fact that the jewel did not come to be seen as one of the three regalia until the early medieval period, around the tenth century, when it emerged as such because of the growing importance of relic worship at that time. Thus the very newness of the jewel as regalia may also help explain Nyoirin's growing appeal during the Heian period. Furthermore, as Abe Yasuro has shown, worship of the *cintāmaṇi*-relic became extremely important during the Insei period, beginning with the sovereign Shirakawa, as retired sovereigns sought a source of authority independent of Fujiwara rule. By the fourteenth century, Nyoirin Kannon was enshrined in rituals held in the Futama of the imperial palace; her *cintāmaṇi* served as both an orthodox Buddhist motif (identified in Tendai with her other attribute of the *cakra,* or wheel, further linking her with the *cakravartin*), and as a symbol of plenitude that linked her with a network of indigenous deities, from whom she drew much of her power. Not only Nyoirin's "femininity" but

[121] Aizen, on the other hand, is an example of a jewel-bearing deity who was linked with various femininely-inclined deities, including Amaterasu, Butsugen, and Jūichimen Kannon, and sometimes with Nyoirin. He himself is thought to possess both male and female natures. Bernard Faure, conversation with the author, May 12, 2008. On Aizen's intricate connections with Nyoirin, see Faure, *Raging Gods*.

also her connections to these old indigenous *kami* cults likely contributed to her authority as a source of imperial legitimacy.

Nyoirin's feminine associations in the Tendai esoteric tradition, influenced by Shōbō and the Ono branch of Shingon's ideology, suggest that it was no accident that she became a favored object of worship for women during the Muromachi period, believed along with Jizō to be their savior from the Blood Pool Hell. Since many female deities, such as jealous mountain goddesses as in the case of Seiryō Gongen, were not particularly friendly to women, Nyoirin's female identifications in themselves might not have been a necessary precursor to her worship by women. Still, her increasingly feminine image likely made her a more sympathetic presence at the temples where women routinely went to worship Nyoirin to pray for safe childbirth and male heirs. Her presence in images of the Blood Pool Hell represents a shift, as women turned increasingly from praying for the political concerns of men toward the fulfillment of their own wishes to avoid eternal suffering. Nyoirin's importance at Kumano, and the long history of aristocratic women making pilgrimages there, also no doubt contributed to the belief spread by Kumano picture-recitation nuns in Nyoirin as a savior of women.

In the rhetoric of Sannō Shintō in the fourteenth century, expressed in the *Keiran shūyōshū,* however, Nyoirin serves as a pivot that links Mt. Hiei and the Hie shrine complex with other mythic and actual locations, not least the inner chamber of the imperial court. The endless unfolding of these identifications serves to collapse time and space, elevating Mt. Hiei itself to a kind of omnipresent and eternal status. The relentlessness with which the text always mentions location in connecting one deity to another in this text suggests that the linking of place to place is no mere accident of its

esoteric logic. We might say the text practices a kind of effective name-dropping, connecting its own tradition to the places that matter most, and thus reaffirming its role as national protector.

Perhaps this move to make one place and time "present" in another reflects the concept of innate enlightenment that pervaded medieval Tendai thought, which is also expressed at various moments in the Lotus Sutra. In the chapter titled "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower," when the Buddha preaches the Lotus Sutra on Vulture Peak, the ancient buddha Prabhūtaratna appears in a jeweled stupa that descends into the scene like a space ship—his place and time become one with Śākyamuni preaching on Vulture Peak.[122] And in the Devadatta chapter, when the dragon girl suddenly appears before Śākyamuni and his retinue, attains enlightenment before their eyes, and offers her wish-fulfilling jewel to the Buddha, she steps across time and space to appear, and spins out the karma of her remaining lifetimes before the eyes of an astonished crowd. In such episodes, moments separated by time and space converge, as though they had never really been separate in the first place.

By similar means, in the *Keiran shūyōshū* the "holy woman" Nyoirin-Inari turns out to be a whole group of "holy women," all linked by the *cintāmaṇi*. In addition to the Nyoirin-Inari-Amaterasu complex, elsewhere in this text the *cintāmaṇi* links Nyoirin to the dragon girl who offers her jewel to Śākyamuni, and to another goddess of fortune and wealth, Benzaiten, which then connects Mt. Hiei with other vistas—the undefiled southern direction, the dragon king's undersea palace, Ishiyamadera which lies to the south, and the sacred island of Chikubushima.

---

[122] *T.* 9, 262, 32b16-34b22. See also *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Watson, 170-81.

Yet we must read these revelations not only on an iconographic level, but also on a historical one. Why would Buddhist priests on Mt. Hiei wish to link their tradition with the imperial palace and the shrines of Ise? In fact they had good reason to want to promote themselves in this way. At this time, during the mid-fourteenth century, political power was shifting increasingly away from the triad of the imperial court, aristocratic clans, and temple-shrine complexes, and into the hands of the warrior government that had risen to power at the start of the Kamakura period. Perhaps the monks on Mt. Hiei realized that their claims to political power—in which they had held a powerful influence for centuries—were slipping away, and they wanted to reaffirm their right to imperial patronage, their importance as historic protectors of political power (particularly through the ordinations of sovereigns), and as ritual specialists who could successfully defend the nation from its enemies.[123] At the same time, with the rise of a new Shintō ideology on Mt. Hiei, local *kami* gained power and influence, vying with Enryakuji itself for imperial patronage, while the temple meanwhile sought to claim their power as its own.

Clearly, as in the Shingon tradition, in Tendai belief and practice Nyoirin served as a kind of mask for various indigenous, Buddhist, and hybrid deities. The *Keiran shūyōshū* reflects a conscious effort to weave an elaborate doctrine out of these affinities, to formalize them into a body of powerful esoteric knowledge. From tracing this one little thread in the vast tradition of Sannō Shintō, we can see that its guardians and creators sought to show on the one hand that their "family" of deities dwelled

[123] On the power struggles among Enryakuji and other shrine-temple complexes during this period, see Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*.

physically on the eastern slope of Mt. Hiei, as depicted in the Sannō mandalas, and on the other, that the mysterious interpenetration of these deities with others in high places was also extremely important. Wherever Nyoirin-Inari-Amaterasu dwelled, there too was the heavenly rock cave, the shrine of Ise, the inner sanctum of the imperial palace; and Nyoirin-Benzaiten-dragon-girl dwelled also on Vulture Peak and Chikubushima. For the guardians of this tradition on Mt. Hiei, time and space were no obstacle. According to the logic of their esoteric magic, in the figure of Nyoirin converged beliefs in the abundant power of relic grains and rice grains, dragons and foxes, of lights that shine in the night and jewels that fulfill all wishes. Other deities had other jewels, but Nyoirin's led to the fulfillment of her career in Japan as a wish-granting goddess, an image that proved too powerful to resist.

AFTERWORD

I wish that we could now neatly tie up all the loose threads that we have encountered in this study, but the further we follow each one, the less likely that becomes. In any case, myth refuses to be tidily categorized, and wanders where it will. The figure of Nyoirin Kannon in medieval Japan paradoxically both arouses desire and promises to fulfill it, belongs to the very human world of worldly benefits, yet grants them from a place of transcendence (as all Buddhist deities must). From our texts we have gleaned a picture of this deity as she may have existed for her devotees, and how she developed as a reflection of human aspirations and needs, while at the same time she took on a life of her own that cannot be fully explained.

In this cursory study of a set of medieval Japanese esoteric texts and their Chinese sources, we have traced some high points of Nyoirin's career in medieval Japan, and it has become clear that things are not always as they seem: the name "Nyoirin" often turns out to be a façade for other gods or nameless forces from which she draws her power. We have also gained a sense of the ambiguous process of "feminization" or "gender play" that follows her like a perfume. In general, images of Nyoirin tell a parallel story that is not incompatible with her feminine identities in Japan, though the images leave open this possibility without offering any conclusive

proof of it. Her iconography in both sculpture and painting usually accords with that described in our texts.

Beginning with the image of the "jewel woman" in the *Kakuzen shō*, we first explored how a process of "metonymic drift," with the *cintāmaṇi* as its main catalyst, drew Nyoirin into a new web of feminine associations in Japan. The *Kakuzen shō* itself offers a set of rituals and images of Nyoirin with no precedent in the surviving versions of the Chinese sources upon which it draws, suggesting that by the late twelfth century she had taken on an identity in Japan unlike that of the bodhisattva who appears in these Chinese texts. Her transformation likely began in earnest with the legendary revelations of Shōbō on Mt. Kasatori in the ninth century; in this tradition she merged with the dragon goddess Seiryō Gongen, and with Seiryō's other *honji*, Juntei Kannon, who had long been recognized as a female deity. Because of Shōbō's influence, Nyoirin held a place of central importance in the Ono branch of Shingon that she still retains today. Shōbō and his lineage of monks also cultivated a tradition at Ishiyamadera in which Nyoirin came to be seen as a figure that granted safe childbirth and conjugal happiness, among other worldly benefits, to her many devotees.

We then looked at the set of Chinese texts, most translated during the Tang dynasty, upon which our Japanese sources draw, to see what images of the bodhisattva emerge in them and what precedents we might discover for Nyoirin's later Japanese transformations. Though these texts can give us only an idealized picture of what devotees practiced in China or India, and not what they actually did practice, the few hints we do have of Ruyilun's worship in China, such as images from Dunhuang and Famensi, among others, suggest that such practices likely corresponded to what we find

in the canonical texts. These texts offer no real precedent for Ruyilun's later mergings with female deities; but they do contain intriguing images of the wish-fulfilling jewel as a metaphor for the *dhāraṇī* itself, as an iconographic attribute, and as a tangible physical object, such as the red crystal used in ritual offerings. Like many Tantric deities, this one promises to appear to believers in dreams, greets them in a cloud of golden light, and offers every possible worldly benefit, including the healing of all kinds of illness. Here we also find visual descriptions of both the two-armed and six-armed Nyoirin.

After this foray into the surviving Chinese sources from which the worship of Nyoirin was constructed in Japan, we turned to an examination of later developments in the Japanese Tendai tradition, in which Nyoirin developed a new set of female identities. This section focuses on a study of the *Keiran shūyōshū*, which bears witness to Nyoirin's merging with Dakiniten, Amaterasu, Benzaiten, and the dragon girl of the Lotus Sutra, as well as with Prince Shōtoku, among other figures. Here, as at other Shintō-Buddhist complexes, by the fourteenth century the process of mythological contagion was appropriated as a conscious creative act, clothing a naturally developing set of beliefs and practices in an elaborate set of doctrines that in this case sought to secure Tendai's place in the medieval religious landscape. Nyoirin's worship as the savior of women from the Blood Pool Hell emerged out of this same tradition, not in any text but in images, suggesting that her appeal to women continued to deepen and broaden during the Muromachi period.

At the beginning of this study we raised the question of whether evolving expressions of a myth as it moved across cultural boundaries might reveal deeper structures latent within it, as Stein has suggested. Since we currently lack so many of

the resources we would need to arrive at a clear answer, we will have to leave this topic as an open question. Still, we can venture a few thoughts on the subject. For example, Nyoirin's "incarnation" as the jewel woman likely represents both new developments and a return to older structures. When we consider Nyoirin's many manifestations in female form in medieval Japan, and the absence of a precedent for them in her Chinese texts, we can imagine that these developments probably represent not a return to some older structure of Nyoirin belief, but a new direction in which it evolved, triggered by the *cintāmaṇi* in the milieu of medieval Japan. As we have seen, the *cintāmaṇi* drew Nyoirin into a new web of associations in Japan—relic worship and the jewel of the imperial regalia, jewel-bearing goddesses of fortune, *nāga* princesses. The *cintāmaṇi* itself does not possess any inherently feminine characteristics, and in fact the broader question of what it "really" is can never be answered, since it was so many things to so many different groups of people—a Buddha relic, a priceless gem, a magical object, a piece of red crystal, a symbol of the heart *cakra,* a metaphor for an all-powerful *dhāraṇī*. In the Shingon context, like the bodhisattva herself, this jewel often took on a tangible physical presence, and became an object that was, while not unique to Nyoirin, at once her attribute and a symbol that was interchangeable with her physical form.

In another way, however, the "jewel woman" image may in fact represent a return to an earlier structure in the mythology of Nyoirin, in that this notion invokes the *cakravartin* and his seven jewels. The *Kakuzen shō* describes the jewel woman as consort who "adorns" the emperor for a lifetime, which may reflect the nature of the *cintāmaṇi* in its original Tantric setting, as a symbol of royal authority. Like the "jewel woman" image, Nyoirin's presence in enthronement rites and rites for the protection of

the sovereign and nation, as well as her identification with Prince Shōtoku, cast her in the role of national protector deity. While such royal associations are not explicit in the Chinese sources themselves, the name "Cakravarti-cintāmaṇi" and many images in these texts do hint at Nyoirin's ability to confer royal authority and power, perhaps in an earlier Indian context as well.

Nyoirin's role as a favorite object of worship for women, however, was likely related to her increasing identification with female deities. As we have seen, women often prayed to Nyoirin, or prayers and recitation rituals were offered on their behalf, to achieve safe childbirth and male heirs, which women may have wanted deeply but whose true motivating force was likely men eager to secure and buttress their political power. It is ironic that as Nyoirin's identity converged with those of other female deities, her "feminine" side lent her a liminal power that was needed for the job of imperial legitimization, even as real-life women themselves remained largely controlled by the aims and wishes of men. While not all female deities are sympathetic to women, in the case of Nyoirin's evolution in the texts we have looked at, women did appear to sense a growing affinity with Nyoirin, if not because of then at least in a process parallel to the development of her own female identity. Images of Nyoirin presiding over the Blood Pool Hell bear mute, articulate witness to female devotees' interest, by the Muromachi period, in their own personal salvation as well.

The question also remains of why Nyoirin's worship seems to have flourished to such a degree in the late Heian, Kamakura and Muromachi periods. Today only traces of her presence survive in Shingon ritual practice—the icons without the urgency, the texts with fewer occasions to perform their rites. Only future research on later *kuden*

and related texts from the Muromachi and Edo periods will be able to tell us whether or not the worship of Nyoirin declined thereafter, or whether instead it took on new forms, and how it evolved into its present state. As we have seen, Nyoirin's popularity in medieval Japan was likely due to the intense interest in *mikkyō* ritual among sovereigns and aristocrats who hoped to achieve their personal ends. With the financial decline of the imperial house and the rise of the warrior government, the previously lavish patronage of the esoteric schools receded, and it is possible that Nyoirin's fortunes may have receded with those of her followers. On another level, though, she lives on, as the monks at Ishiyamadera and Daigoji will tell you. She stands outside of time, waiting to manifest herself in new forms for those few who have the ability, or the wish, to see.

Works Cited

Primary sources

Abbreviations

DNBZ *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書. Edited by Busshō kankōkai 仏書刊行会. 151 vols. Tokyo: Bussho kankōkai, 1911-22.

DNZ *Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經. 750 vols. in 150 cases. Edited by Maeda Eun 前田慧雲. Kyoto: Zōkyō shoin 藏經書院, 1905-1912.

KDZ *Kobo daishi zenshū* 弘法大師全集. 8 vols. Edited by Mikkyō bunka kenkyūjo 密教文化研究所. Mt. Kōya: Kōyasan daigaku mikkyō bunka kenkyūjo, 1965.

P Text listings from *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking Edition—Catalogue and Index*. Edited by Suzuki Daisetz Teitaro et al. Tokyo and Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1961.

ST *Shintō taikei* 神道体系. Edited by Shintō taikei hensankai 神道体系編纂会. Tokyo: Shintō taikei hensankai, 1990.

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 和渡邊海旭, et al. 85 vols. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924-32.

TZ *Tendaishū zensho* 天台宗全書. Edited by Tendai shūten kankōkai 天台宗典刊行會. Tokyo: Tendai shūten kankōkai jimusho, 1936.

ZTZ *Zoku Tendaishū zensho* 續天台宗全書. Edited by Tendai shūten hensanjo 天台宗典編纂所. Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1988.

Texts

Chinese sources

Dubiao ruyi moni zhuanlun shengwang cidi niansong bimi zuiyao lüefa 都表如意摩尼轉輪聖王次第念誦祕密最要略法 (J. *Tohyō nyoi mani tenrin seiō shidai nenju himitsu saiyō ryaku hō*). Translated by Jietuoshizi 解脱師子 (n.d.). *T*. 20, 1089.

Fomu da gongjiao mingwang jing 佛母大孔雀明王經 (J. *Butsumo dai kujyaku myōō kyō,* Sk. *Mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñi).* Translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛 (705-774). T.19, 982.

Foshuo dacang zhengjiao xiepen jing 佛說大藏正教血盆經 (J. *Bussetsu daizō shōkyō ketsubon kyō*). *DNZ* 87, 4:2999.

Foshuo guanzizai pusa ruyixin tuoluoni zhou jing 佛說觀自在菩薩如意心陀羅尼呪經 (J. *Bussetsu kanjizai bosatsu nyoishin darani ju kyō).* Translated by Yijing 義淨 (635-713). *T.* 20, 1081.

Foshuo ruyilun lianhuaxin rulai xiuxing guanmenyi 佛說如意輪蓮華心如來修行觀門儀 (J. *Bussetsu nyoirin rengeshin nyorai shugyō kanmongi*). Translated by Cixian 慈賢 (Southern Song dynasty, 960-1279). *T.* 20, 1090.

Guanshiyin pusa bimizang ruyilun tuoluoni shenzhou jing 觀世音菩薩祕密藏如意輪陀羅尼神呪經. (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu himitsuzō nyoirin darani shjinju kyō*). Translated by Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 (652-710). *T.* 20, 1082.

Guanzizai pusa ruyilun niansong yigui 觀自在菩薩如意輪念誦儀軌 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin nenju giki).* Translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛. *T.* 20, 1085.

Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yuqie 觀自在菩薩如意輪瑜伽 (J. *Kanjizai bosatsu nyoirin yuga*). Translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛. *T.* 20, 1086.

Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni lun tuoluoni niansong fa 觀世音菩薩如意摩尼輪陀羅尼念誦法 (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu nyoi mani rin darani nenju hō*). Translated by Ratnacinta 寶思惟 (d. 721). *T.* 20, 1084.

Guanshiyin pusa ruyi moni tuoluoni jing 觀世音菩薩如意摩尼陀羅尼經 (J. *Kanzeon bosatsu nyoi mani darani kyō*). Translated by Ratnacinta 寶思惟. *T.* 20, 1083.

Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yuqie fayao 觀自在如意輪菩薩瑜伽法要 (J. *Kanjizai nyoirin bosatsu yuga hōyō*). Translated by Vajrabodhi 金剛智 (671-741). *T.* 20, 1087.

Jin guang ming jing 金光明經 (J. *Konkōmyō kyō*, Sk. *Suvarnaprabhasa-sutra*). *T.* 16, 665.

Miaofa lianhua jing 妙法蓮華經 (J. *Myōhō renge kyō*, Sk. *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*). *T.* 9, 262.

Qijuzhi fomu suoshuo zhunti tuoluoni jing (*Shichikutei butsumo shosetsu juntei darani kyō*) 七俱胝佛母所說准提陀羅尼經. Translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛. *T.* 20, 1076.

Qixing ruyilun bimiyao jing 七星如意輪祕密要經 (J. *Shichishō nyoirin himitsuyō kyō*). Translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛. *T.* 20, 1091.

Ruyi baozhu zhuanlun bimi xianshen chengfo jinlun zhouwang jing 如意寶珠轉輪祕密現身成佛金輪呪王經 (J. *Nyoi hōju tenrinn himitsu genshin jōbutsu kinrin juō kyō*). Translated by Amoghavajra 不空金剛. *T.* 19, 961.

Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu bijue 如意輪菩薩觀門義注祕訣 (J. *Nyoirin bosatsu kanmongichū hiketsu*). *T.* 20, 1088.

Ruyilun tuoluoni jing 如意輪陀羅尼經 (J. *Nyoirin darani kyō*). Translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (572-727). *T.* 20, 1080.

Japanese texts

Asabashō 阿娑縛抄. By Shōchō 承澄 (1205-1282). *T.* Zuzō 9, 3190.

Besson zakki 別尊雜記. By Shinkaku 心覺 (1117-1180). *T.* Zuzō 3.

Daigoji engi 醍醐寺縁起. *DNBZ* 117, 246-52.

Daigoji shinyōroku 醍醐寺新要録. By Gien 義演 (1558-1626). 2 vols. Edited by Daigoji bunkazai kenkyūjo 醍醐寺文化財研究所. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1991.

Daigo zōjiki 醍醐雑事記. By Keien 慶延 (12th century). Edited by Nakajima Shunji 中島俊司. Kyoto: Daigoji, 1932.

Denbōki 傳法記. In *Denbō ki to sono shihai monjo* 伝法記とその紙背文書, edited by Hayashiya Tatsusaburō 林屋辰三郎. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1991.

Hie Sannō hidenki 日吉山王祕傳記. *ZTZ Shintō* 神道 1, 211-21.

Hie Sannō ki 日吉山王記. *ZTZ Shintō* 神道 1, 270-96.

Ishiyamadera engi 石山寺縁起. *DNBZ* 117, 179-200.

Jihō kongō nenju shidai 持宝金剛念誦次第. *KDZ* 2, 556-86

Jihō kongō nenju shidai gosaku 持宝金剛念誦次第御作. *KDZ* 4, 774-93.

Jikkanshō 十巻抄. By Keijū 恵什 (ca. 1135). *T.* Zuzō 3.

Kakuzen shō 覺禪鈔. By Kakuzen 覺禪 (1143-?). *DNBZ* 45-51.

Kegon engi emaki 華厳縁起絵巻. By Myōe 明恵 (1173-1232). In *Kegon engi* 華厳縁起, edited by Kameta Tsutomu 亀田孜. *Nihon emakimono zenshū* 日本絵巻物全集, vol. 7, edited by Tanaka Ichimatsu 田中一松. Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1959.

Keiran shūyōshū 渓嵐拾葉集. By Kōshū 光宗 (1276-1350). *T.* 76, 2410.

Kojidan 古事談. By Minamoto no Akikane 源顕兼 (1160-1215). In *Kokushi taikei* 国史大系 vol. 15. Tokyo: Keizai zasshi sha, 1904.

Miwaryū Shintō chō hoshinshō 三輪流神道汀補眞鈔. *ST*, *Shingon Shintō* 真言神道 2, 127-49.

Rokkakudō engi 六角堂縁起. *DNBZ* 117, 129.

Sanbō ekotoba 三寶絵詞. By Minamoto no Tamenori 源為憲 (ca. 941-1011). *Sanbōe shūsei—Shohon taishō* 三宝絵集成—諸本對照. Edited by Koizumi Hiroshi 小泉弘 and Takahashi Nobuyuki 高橋伸幸 (Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 1980).

Sange yōryakki 山家要略記. *DNBZ* 120, 145-73.

Sannō mikki 山王密記. *ZTZ Shintō* 神道 1, 222-69.

Sannō ryakushō 山王略抄. *TZ* 12, 233-42.

Shinran muki 親鸞夢記. By Shinbutsu 眞佛 (1209-1258). In *Teihon Shinran Shōnin Zenshū* 定本親鸞聖人全集 4, edited by Shinran Shōnin zenshū kankōkai 親鸞聖人全集刊行会, 201-2. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1969-70.

Shōyūki 小右記. By Fujiwara no Sanesuke 藤原実資. 3 vols. *Shiryō taisei bekkan* 『史料大成』別巻 1-3. 99 vols. Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1965.

Zōsōjō sonni hosshō sonja ryakufu 贈僧正尊意法性尊者略譜. By Shū'in 秀胤 (19th century). *ZTZ Shiden* 史伝 2, 144-154.

Secondary sources

Ábe Ryūichi. *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Abe Yasuro 阿部泰郎. "Hōju to ōken: chūsei ōken to mikkō girei" 宝珠と王権ー中世王権と密教儀礼. In *Nihon shisō* 日本思想, 2 vols., edited by Yamaori Tatsuo 山折哲夫 et al., 115-169. Iwanami kōza tōyō shisō 岩波講座東洋思想 16. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989.

Adolphson, Mikael S. *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

Akamatsu Toshihide 赤松俊秀. "Kami Daigo no kiyotaki myōjin zō" 上醍醐の清瀧明神像. *Bijutsu shi* 美術史 I, no. 3 (March 1951): 1-26.

Ambros, Barbara. "Liminal Journeys: Pilgrimages of Noblewomen in Mid-Heian Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, nos. 3–4 (1997): 301-45.

Asai Kazuharu 浅井和春. "Fukukenjaku, Juntei Kannon zō" 不空羂索観音・准胝観音像. *Nihon no Bijutsu* 日本の美術 382 (March 1998): 1-98.

Bharati, Agehananda. *The Tantric Tradition*. New York: Anchor Books, 1970.

Blacker, Carmen. *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975.

Bogel, Cynthea. "Canonizing Kannon: The Ninth-Century Esoteric Buddhist Altar at Kanshinji." *Art Bulletin* LXXXIV, no. 1 (March 2002): 32-64.

Bonnefoy, Yves, ed. *Asian Mythologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Chapin, Helen B. "A Study in Buddhist Iconography." In *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, edited by Otto Kümmel and William Cohn, 29-43. Berlin and Leipzig: Verlag Von Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1932.

Chutiwongs, Nandana. *The Iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Mainland South East Asia*. Ph.D. diss., Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1984.

Davidson, Ronald M. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Faure, Bernard. "A Jewel of a Woman: Medieval Ideology and Wishful Thinking." Paper presented at Yale University, April 1999.

———. *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

———. *Raging Gods: The Implicit Pantheon of Medieval Japan*. Forthcoming.

———. "Relics, Regalia, and the Dynamics of Secrecy in Japanese Buddhism." In *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions,* edited by Elliott Wolfson, 271-87. New York: Seven Bridge Press, 1999.

Fowler, Sherry D. *Murōji: Rearranging Art and History at a Japanese Buddhist Temple*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.

———. "Nyoirin Kannon: A Chronological Analysis of Six-armed Sculptural Examples from the Ninth through the Fourteenth Century." M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1989.

———. "Nyoirin Kannon: Stylistic Evolution of Sculptural Images." *Orientations* Vol. 20 (1989): 58-65.

Frédéric, Louis. *Buddhism*. Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1995.

Fritsch, Ingrid. *Japans blinde Sänger: im Schutz der Gottheit Myōon-Benzaiten*. Münich: Iudicium-Verlag, 1996.

Fujii Yukiko 藤井由紀子. "Guse Kannon no seiritsu—reikenka sareta Shōtoku Taishi" 「救世観音」の成立—霊験化された聖徳太子. In Ōyama Seiichi 大山誠一, ed., *Shōtoku Taishi no shinjitsu* 聖徳太子の真実. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2003.

———. *Shōtoku Taishi no denshō* 聖徳太子の伝承. Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1999.

Fujimaki Kazuhiro 藤巻和宏. "Ben'ichizan nyoi hōju-hō o meguru Tōmitsu-kei kuden no tenkai: Sanbōin-ryū sanzon gōgyōhō o chūshin to shite" 宀一山と如意宝珠法をめぐる東密系口伝の展開—三宝院流三尊合行法を中心として. *Muromachi* 室町 5 (2001): 1-15.

———. "Hasedera engi no keisei to tenkai" 長谷寺縁起の形成の展開. Ph.D. diss., Waseda University, 2002.

———. "Nyoi hōju o meguru Tōmitsu-kei kuden no tenkai to Ben'ichi-san engirui no shōsei: 'Ben'ichisan himitsuki' o chūshin toshite" 如意宝珠をめぐる東密系口伝の展開と宀一山縁起類の生成—『宀一山秘密記』を中心として. *Kokugo kokubun* 国語国文 71, no. 1 [809] (2002): 1-17.

Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Gimello, Robert. “Icon and Incantation: The Goddess Zhunti and the Role of Images in the Occult Buddhism of China.” In *Images in Asian Religions,* edited by Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, 225-56. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004.

Gōrai Shigeru 五来重. *Gangōji Gokurakubō chūsei shomin shinkō shiryō no kenkyū* 元興寺極楽坊中世庶民信仰資料の研究. Tokyo: Hozōkan, 1964.

Grapard, Allan G. “Of Emperors and Foxy Ladies.” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 13, *Moines, rois et marginaux: Études sur le bouddhisme médiéval japonais* (2002-3): 127-49.

———. “*Keiranshūyōshū*: A Different Perspective on Mt. Hiei in the Medieval Period.” In *Revisioning “Kamakura” Buddhism,* edited by Richard K. Payne, 55-69. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998.

———. “Linguistic Cubism—A Singularity of Pluralism in the Sannō Cult. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14, nos. 2-3 (1987): 211-34.

Groner, Paul. *Ryogen and Mount Hiei: Japanese Tendai in the Tenth Century.* Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism Series, vol. 15. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002.

Hayami Tasuku 速水侑. *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō* 平安貴族社会と仏教. Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan,1975.

———. *Kannon shinkō* 観音信仰. Tokyo: Kōsenshō, 1981.

———, ed. *Kannon shinkō jiten* 観音信仰辞典. Tokyo: Ebisu kōshō shuppan, 2000.

Inokuchi Taijun 井ノ口泰淳 et al. *Mikkyō no hotoketachi* 密教のほとけたち. Kōzō mikkyō bunka shirizu 講座密教文化シリズ, no. 3. Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 1991.

Inoue Kazutoshi 井上一稔. “Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō” 如意輪観音像・馬頭観音像. *Nihon no bijutsu* 日本の美術 312 (May 1992): 1-98.

Ishida Mosaku 石田茂作. *Shakyō yori mitaru narachō bukkyō no kenkyū* 写経より見たる奈良朝仏教の研究. Tokyo: Tōyō bunko, 1966.

Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡. “The Medieval Period: The Kami Merge with Buddhism.” In *Shinto—A Short History,* by Inoue Nobutaka 井上順孝 (ed.), Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun 遠藤潤, and Mori Mizue 森瑞枝. Translated and adapted by Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, 63-107. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.

Iyanaga Nobumi 彌永信美. *Kannon henyō tan: bukkyō shinwagaku II* 観音変容譚—仏教神話学 II. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2002.

Kakuzen shō kenkyūkai 覚禅抄研究会, ed. *Kakuzen shō no kenkyū* 覚禅抄の研究. Kōya: Shinnōin gyōei bunko, 2004.

Kamens, Edward. *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's* Sanbōe. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988.

Kang Xiaofei. *The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Kasahara Kazuo 笠原一男, ed. *A History of Japanese Religion*. Translated by Paul McCarthy and Gaynor Sekimori. Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2001.

Kieschnick, John. *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

Kobayashi Taichirō 小林太市郎. *Bukkyō geijutsu no kenkyū* 仏教芸術の研究, *Shūkyō geijutsu ron hen* 宗教芸術論編 I, *Kobayashi Taichirō chosakushu* 小林太市郎著作集 vol. 7. Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1974.

Kodate Naomi 高達奈緒美. "Chi no ike jigoku no esō o meguru kakusho—kyūsaisha toshite no Nyoirin Kannon to mondai o chūshin ni" 血の池地獄の絵相をめぐる覚書—救済者としての如意輪観音の問題を中心に. In Sakamoto Kaname 坂本要, ed., *Jigoku no sekai* 地獄の世界, 667-90. Tokyo: Keisuisha, 1991.

Kuroda Toshio 黒田俊雄. "Historical Consciousness and *Hon-jaku* Philosophy in the Medieval Period on Mount Hiei." Translated by Allan G. Grapard. In *The Lotus Sutra and Japanese Culture,* edited by George J. Tanabe, Jr. and Willa Jane Tanabe. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structuralist Anthropology*. Translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic Books, 1963.

The Lotus Sutra. Translated by Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準. *The Mandala of the Mountain: Shugendō and Folk Religion*. Edited by Gaynor Sekimori. Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2005.

Miyata Noboru 宮田登, ed. *Sei to mibun—Jakusha, haisha no shōsei to hiun* 性と身分—弱者，敗者の聖性と悲運, Bukkyō to Nihonjin 仏教と日本人 8. Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1989. 169-206.

Moerman, D. Max. *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005.

Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部. *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*. Translated by Richard Bowring. London: Penguin Books, 2005.

Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan 奈良國立博物館, ed. *Busshari to hōju: Shaka o shitau kokoro* 佛舎利と寶珠：釋迦を慕う心 [English title: *Ultimate Sanctuaries: The Aesthetics of Buddhist Relic Worship*]. Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2001.

Ono Genmyō 小野玄妙, ed. *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* 佛書解説大辭典. Vols. 5 and 8. Tokyo: Daitō shuppan, 1933-36, 1974, 1988.

Osabe Kazuo 長部和雄. *Tōdai mikkyōshi zakkō* 唐代密教史雑考. Tokyo: Keisuisha, 1990.

———. *Tōsō mikkyōshi ronkō* 唐宋密教史論考. Tokyo: Mizuta bunshōdō, 1982.

Otsu shi rekishi hakubutsukan 大津市歴史博物館, ed. *Tendai o mamoru kamigami—Sannō mandara no shosō* 天台を守る神々—山王曼荼羅の諸相. Otsu: Otsu shi rekishi hakubutsukan, 2006.

Ouaknin, Marc-Alain. *Mysteries of the Alphabet: The Origins of Writing*. Translated by Josephine Bacon. New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1999.

Padoux, Andre. *Vac: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*. Translated by Jacques Gontier. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Rambelli, Fabio. "Texts, Talismans, and Jewels: The *Reikiki* and the Performativity of Sacred Texts in Medieval Japan." In *Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Taigen Dan Leighton, 52-78. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Reis-Habito, Maria. "The Repentance Ritual of the Thousand-armed Guanyin." In *Studies in Central & East Asian Religions*, vol. 4 (Autumn 1991): 42-51.

Ruch, Barbara, ed. *Engendering Faith*. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002.

Ruppert, Brian. *Jewel in the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

———. "Pearl in the Shrine: A Genealogy of the Buddhist Jewel of the Japanese Sovereign. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, nos. 1-2 (2002): 1-33.

Saeki Arikiyo 佐伯有清. *Shōbō* 聖宝. Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1991.

Saigo Nobutsuna 西郷信綱. *Kodaijin to yume* 古代人と夢. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972.

Sasama Yoshihiko 笹間良彦. *Dakini shinkō to sono zokushin* ダキニ信仰とその俗信. Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1988.

Satō Hiroo 佐藤弘夫, *Amaterasu no henbō—chūsei shinbutsu kōshōshi no shiza* アマテラスの変貌―中世神仏交渉史の視座. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2000.

Saunders, E. Dale. *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Schafer, Edward H. *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

———. The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.

Scheid, Bernhard and Mark Teeuwen, eds. *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Sharf, Robert H. "Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism." In *Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context*, edited by Robert H. Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf, 151–97. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Shively, Donald H. and William H. McCullough, eds. *Heian Japan*. Vol. 2, *The Cambridge History of Japan*, edited by John Whitney Hall, Marius B. Jansen, Madoka Kanai, and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Shudō Zenju 首藤善樹. *Kimpusen* 金峰山. Nara: Kimpusenji, 1985.

Smyers, Karen A. *The Fox and the Jewel: Shared and Private Meanings in Contemporary Japanese Inari Worship*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

Sørensen, Henrik H. "The Worship of the Great Dipper in Korean Buddhism." In *Religions in Traditional Korea*, edited by Henrik H. Sørensen, 71-105. Copenhagen: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1995.

Soymié, Michel. *Dōkyō kenkyū* 道鏡研究, vol. 1. Tokyo: Shōshinsha, 1965.

Stein, Rolf. "Avalokiteśvara/Kouan-yin, un exemple de transformation d'un dieu en déesse." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 2 (1986): 17-80.

Stone, Jacqueline I. *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

Strickmann, Michel. *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Edited by Bernard Faure. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

———. "The Consecration Sūtra: A Buddhist Book of Spells." In *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha,* edited by Robert E. Buswell, Jr., 75-118. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990.

Takahashi Yūsuke 高橋悠介. "Enman'i-za to Zenchiku" 円満井座の舎利と禅竹. *Zeami: Chūsei no geijutsu to bunka* 中世の芸術と文化 3 (2005): 124-56.

Takaii Kankai 高井観海. *Mikkyō jisō taikei—tokuni Sanbōin kenshinpō o kichō to shite*. 密教事相体系–特に三寶院憲深方を基調として. Kyoto: Takaii zenkashū chosaku kankōkai, 1952.

Takemi Momoko. "Menstruation Sutra Belief in Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 10, nos. 2-3 (1983): 229-46.

Tanaka Takako 田中貴子. *Gehō to aihō no chūsei* 外法と愛法の中世. Tokyo: Sunakoya shobō, 1993.

———. "'Gyokujo' no seiritsu to genkai: 'Jishin oshō musōki' kara 'Shinran no yume ki' made" 〈玉女〉の成立と限界—『慈鎮和尚夢想記』から『親鸞夢記』まで. In *Jōsei to bukkyō* 女性と仏教 4: *Miko to joshin* 巫女と女神, edited by Ōsami Kazuo 大隅和雄 and Nishiguchi Junko 西口順子, 91-126. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989.

———. *Keiran shūyōshū no sekai* 『渓嵐拾葉集』の世界. Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2003.

Teeuwen, Mark. "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity: Amaterasu as the Judge of the Dead." In *Buddhas and Kami in Japan:* Honji Suijaku *as a Combinatory Paradigm*, edited by Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, 115-44. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.

Teiser, Stephen. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Ten Grotenhuis, Elizabeth. *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

Tokyo Miwa ikazuchi 東京三輪いかづち, ed. *Shingō Miwayama: Kamigami no higō o hiraku* 神郷三輪山—神々の秘郷をひらく [English title: *Divine Mountain Miwayama*]. Tokyo: Dōyūkan, 1990.

Tsuda Tetsuei 津田徹英. "Kaisetsu: Daigoji Reihōkan no Nyoirin Kannon zō" 解説：醍醐寺霊宝館の如意輪観音像. *Daigo Shunju* 醍醐春秋 38 (2001): 16-32.

Van Gulik, Robert. *Hayagrīva: The Mantrayānic Aspect of Horse Cult in China and Japan*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1935.

Washio Ryūki 鷲尾隆輝, ed. *Ishiyamadera engi emaki* 石山寺縁起絵巻. Otsu: Ishiyamadera, 1996.

Washizuka Hiromitsu 鷲塚泰光, ed. *Kannon no mitera—Ishiyamadera* 観音のみてら—石山寺. Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2002.

Wu Limin 吳立民 and Han Jinke 韓金科. *Famensi digong Tang mi mantuluo zhi yanjiu* 法門寺地宮唐密曼荼羅之研究. Hong Kong: Zhongguo Fojiao wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, 1998.

Yamamoto Hiroko 山本ひろ子. *Ijin—Chūsei Nihon no mikkyōteki sekai* 異神—中世日本の密教的世界, vol. 2. Tokyo: Chikuma gakugei bunko, 2003.

———. *Henjōfu* 変成譜. Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1993.

Yamaori Tetsuo 山折哲雄, ed. *Inari shinkō jiten* 稲荷信仰辞典. Tokyo: Ebisu kōshō shuppan, 1999.

Yü Chün-fang 于君方. *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Zenkoku jisha butsuzō gaido 全国寺社仏像ガイド. Tokyo: Bijutsu shuppansha, 2001.